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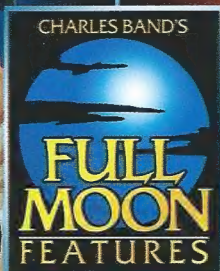
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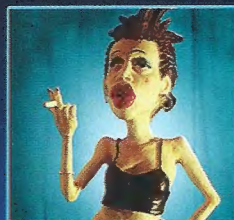
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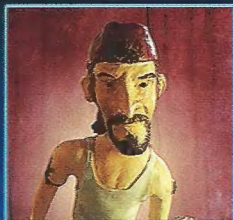
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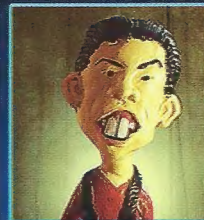
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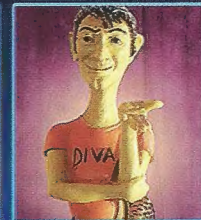
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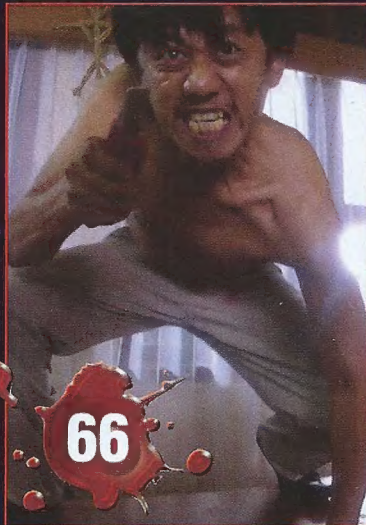
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GUTS

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FIRST RITES

We all have a finite gift of life, with not one of us able to determine the exact moment when the credits will roll on our little first-person film. We all know this. So why do some of us opt to squander that running time? Why do so many of us sit around and wait for our ships to roll in, crossing our fingers and hoping our fortunes will change, when we have the power to carve our own identities and make our own destinies? Especially now, with global-reaching technology available to us, and living as we do in a fairly forward-thinking, free society; we can become the people we want to be and follow our own respective muses, making it up as we go along and leaving our marks, our trails of bread crumbs for others to follow. And if we fail, we shouldn't be afraid to fail with grandiosity, as those follies will only make our triumphs seem sweeter.

I imagine Jess Franco believed this, and certainly that's why I have long admired him and been fascinated—OK, obsessed—with his legacy and body of work. To love Franco is to love all of Franco, warts and all—and certainly, his 200-plus (that we know of) filmography has its fair share of warts. But you don't love individual Franco films as much as you view each effort as an impulse, a thought, a part of a larger equilibrium that, stitched together, makes up an inimitable tapestry and portrait of the man, of a life lived behind and in some cases in front of the lens. There really was no one else like him.

And now he's gone.

I'm not going to bog this editorial down with any sort of history lesson on Franco; I've done that elsewhere, and in these pages, we've brought in two men, David Gregory and Tim Lucas, who have spent a great deal of their own "running times" contemplating and analyzing his work, as well as legendary actors Jack Taylor and Maria Rohm, who knew the director well enough to color in our lengthy tribute. If you know, love and mourn Franco, this issue will be essential reading, and something you will hold close to your heart. If you are just learning about the Spanish filmmaker's remarkable history, this is a comprehensive entry point. Beyond the sex, sleaze, microbudgets, meandering narratives and zoom-lens addiction lay profound poetry both intentional and inadvertent. Franco should never be forgotten. He was an auteur, and his life demands respect.

In a different cinematic galaxy lies another Latin filmmaker, Guillermo del Toro, and although one can't properly put *Vampyros Lesbos* and *Pan's Labyrinth* in the same category, del Toro shares with Franco the burning desire to create and articulate himself, using motion pictures as his vessel—but doing it his way, his passions, themes and obsessions becoming a brand unto themselves. Of course, del Toro has something Franco never did—money!—and *Pacific Rim* is the maverick filmmaker's priciest and largest-scale opus to date. We have del Toro's musings on *Rim* and his earlier Spanish masterwork *The Devil's Backbone*, which receives the Criterion disc treatment this summer. *Pacific Rim* looks brilliant, and having del Toro's words in our magazine is an honor that never, ever gets old. We love the man, and hope you enjoy Phil Brown's feature.

A closer look at our contents reveals yet another force of nature who has taken control of her legacy and committed herself to following her callings without compromise: actress, artist, musician and intellectual Fairuza Balk. I'm of the generation that fell in love with Balk, her exoticism (used to greatest effect when she played the feline Aissa in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*) and those ghostly eyes, which, if you stared too long, made you feel like you had just opened the Ark of the Covenant. Balk has been missing from the screen for some time, but as our lengthy chat with the lady proves, she has been incredibly active creating art, sensual pop music and even her own candles, only making movies when she feels like it and the role is right. Here she talks of her decisions and her very personal views on celebrity and the double-edged sword of social networking. There's more to her than *The Craft*—but what the hell, we dragged the film's director Andrew Fleming on board to further discuss that teen-witch classic.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to say goodbye to FANGORIA's lovely Dee Erwine, a gentle soul whom I know many of our subscribers conversed with over the double decade she was here. Our Dee waged a brief battle with pancreatic cancer, and though we hoped she would endure a bit longer, the hideous disease got the upper hand. Farewell, sweet Dee. We hope there are beautiful gardens, ever blossoming, where you are now, and we thank you for being so kind in a world in which it's much easier to be cruel.

—Chris Alexander, Editor
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FANGORIA

AUGUST 2013

FANGORIA #325

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250 West 49th Street, Suite 805, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10019
www.fangoria.com

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THANK YOU: Fairuza Balk, Simon Barrett, Andre Becker, Blair Bender, *Beneath's* cast & crew, James Bickert, Tom Chen, Sean Clark, Grant Cramer, Guillermo del Toro, Jason Eisener, Elias, Samuel Feeney, Andrew Fleming, Diane Franklin, Christopher Glati, David Goodfellow, Neil Jordan, Paul Kane, Jason Kasperski, James Kent, Chad Crawford Kinkle, Kevin Lehane, Jeff Lieberman, Tiffany Malloy, Don May Jr., Thea Munster, Seth Needle, Nicotophobia Films, the *Night of the Living Dead Live!* team, Peter Phok, Johannes Roberts, Maria Rohm, George A. Romero, John Russo, Eduardo Sanchez, David Sehring, Steven Severin, Severin Films, Suzanne Snyder, Gina Soliz, Russ Streiner, Jack Taylor, Lili Taylor, Andrew van den Houten, Adam Wingard, Michael Winton, Ricky Wood and Burt Young.

Dedicated to Dee Erwine (1947-2013)

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POSTAL ZONE

Animation and '80splotation

...I was saddened to hear of the passing of Ray Harryhausen, a true master of special FX, back when they were indeed *special*. After seeing *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* when I was in grade school, I was so impressed that I became an instant fan, and have loved his work ever since. True craftsmen like him are few, as the painstaking work that went into creating such wonders was arduous, yet Harryhausen never slacked off and made sure each of his films would give audiences the thrills they had come to expect from him. He leaves behind a body of work that will never be forgotten, and will be discovered and enjoyed by many in the years to come.

Also, I really enjoyed the article on Chris Seaver and his *Warlock Home Video* in *Fango* #322. I had never heard of him or the company before, but was so intrigued after checking out your two-page spread that I went to the website and bought *Death O' Lantern* (I was mostly drawn by its title and cover art). After watching it, I was struck by how much fun the cast seemed to be having, which made me have fun, too. Sure, the budget looks like the cost of a fast-food Value Meal, the acting is poor and the FX are...lacking, but it captured the '80s amusingly well, with the slang and clothes, and it fit right in with the type of VHS horror I so enjoyed back then. This is the kind of movie that will probably get big laughs on a Friday night at the home for the criminally insane—and that's the highest compliment I can give.

Mike McCullough
Selbyville, DE

Dee Thoughts

...I was deeply moved (I'm still in some kind of shock) when I read that your subscription manager Dee Erwine had passed away. I don't know how many times I wrote the words "Dear Dee...", since I'm a subscriber to your magazine, and I'm deeply saddened that I can write those words of greeting no more. I never met her in person, but thanks to the article by Bekah McKendry at *Fangoria.com*, I now have a face to go with the name. Every time I wrote to her when there was a small problem, she always answered within record time and had a solution up her sleeve for whatever mishap had occurred. I think I speak for every one of the subscribers who had contact with her that we



will all miss her dearly.

Wolfgang Müllner
Krems, Austria

...The success of *FANGORIA* is due to the love all of its crew put into it. So it was with great sadness that we faithful readers lost our older sister, who was always patient and kind to everyone even in her most difficult times. Although her name will no longer be present on the masthead, her legacy, dedication and friendship will live on. Goodbye, Dee Erwine—we will all miss you, even in places as distant as my country.

Stephan Segantini
Brazil

The Heart of Horror

...Being a fan of the genre, I am constantly asked by family and co-workers why I like films that are so gory, vulgar, etc. (all their terms, of course). While I know the answer to that question, I have never been able to articulate those thoughts. Then I read your *First Rites* in *Fango* #322. You were able to put my feelings about the genre, especially talking with the non-horror crowd, into perfect terms when you wrote, "Today, most films considered 'hardcore' are just cruel. *Evil Dead* was not. It was merciless, yes, but it had heart, emotion and the aforementioned craft that made it such a marvel."

The fun in being a horror fan lies in the ability to deconstruct what you're viewing—to look

for its component parts and rebuild it into something you see in a way that nobody else does. The idea of heart in horror is so important, too. Without heart, as Raimi's movie has, an audience has no real connection to what they're seeing and can quickly lose interest, which is why I find a lot of today's "hardcore" stuff serves very little purpose. The amount of gore and vulgarity has never mattered much to me, with the exception of wondering how they did it (which is one reason I love *Fango*). I can take as much or as little blood as a picture brings to the table, but without heart, it will not resonate.

I want to say thanks for your personal story of your father and the video store, and putting into words what I never could.

Andrew Morris
No address

Further West

...I'm glad you decided to publish the letter regarding the West Memphis Three in *Fango* #321. It is a perfect example of the ignorance that plagues this country, and is just getting worse. The ill-informed scribe said he will no longer be reading *FANGORIA* because of the way the West Memphis Three were represented in the magazine, that the once-imprisoned trio are guilty of murder and how dare *Fango* glorify something like this and blah, blah, blah. This individual obviously hasn't followed the case since 1996, because if he had, he would know that Damien Echols, Jesse Misskelley and Jason Baldwin are innocent, free, case closed.

I find the publication of this letter important because it illustrates how people do not pay attention to anything anymore, including major news events. This individual was angry and passionate about what he was writing, but he was completely wrong. It's a good thing he was smart enough to leave his full name out, keeping him from making a complete ass of himself. The moral of this story is, do the research before you start spouting off about something.

Nick Leonetti
Somers Point, NJ

CORRECTION: In a photo from *The Purge* in our *Lena Headey* story in *Fango* #324, young actor Max Burkholder was misidentified as Adelaide Kane.

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MONSTER INVASION

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"LORD OF DARKNESS" Feeding time in the Highlands

If you've ever visited Scotland, you've probably heard the story of Sawney Bean. The infamous cannibal, along with his inbred brood, robbed and ate travelers in the Highlands during the 15th or 16th century (depending on whose version of the legend you believe). Scholars have argued over whether these man-eating tales are fact or fiction, but either way, they've served as grisly inspiration for both books (Jack Ketchum's *Off Season*) and films (Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*), the latter now including the independent Scottish feature *Lord of Darkness*, previously titled *Sawney: Flesh of Man*.

"It's a modern-day take on the Sawney Bean legend," first-time director Ricky Wood says of *Lord*, debuting on DVD from Lionsgate June 25. "We updated it mainly for budgetary reasons, because a period piece would have required a much larger cast, castles, costumes and what have you. [The main character is] one of Sawney Bean's descendants, so there's that connection to the myth."

Driving a black cab, the modern Sawney (played by veteran Brit actor David Hayman of *Sid and Nancy*, *Burke and Hare* and many more) picks up his unfortunate victims and brings them back to his lair, where he and his murderous family torture them and feast upon their flesh. This twisted clan is made up of his deformed sons and a mother so deranged even Sawney has to keep her under lock and key. They inhabit a warren of caves and tunnels in the wilds of Scotland, decorated with gory tableaux of body parts from their various victims. Despite the gruesome subject matter, *Lord* also has a wicked sense of humor. "It's a fantasy/horror that doesn't take itself too seriously," Wood says.

It was a tight family unit behind the scenes as well, with Wood's brother Ranald serving as cinematographer while their father Richard wrote the script and did the special FX. "It really was a tiny crew," the director recalls. "Friends helped out as grips and runners, but it was never a consistent group. It was always changing, the only constants being the cast and the three of us."

Due to the tight budget, the Woods fit in the lensing around their full-time employment at TVP Films (which makes ads, corporate videos, training movies and animation), using every weekend and spare hour they had to work on *Lord*. Thus, the 30 days of

shooting were spread out over two years, leading to various headaches when it came to continuity and the availability of actors and crew. "It was tough having to work on weekends and nights," Wood says. "We could have made a low-budget film in a week, but it would have looked like it. While lack of money can be a restriction, the amount of time and effort you put in should not be."

Adds Samuel Feeney, who plays Hamish MacDonald, a journalist investigating the disappearances, "The biggest challenge was dipping in and out over such a long period of time. But working with Ricky was great fun, so it never really felt like a burden. I know Ricky would disagree because he'd have preferred more crew, but it's nice having that size, since you know everyone is there because they really want to be. That effort and work transposes onto the screen. Sometimes, much larger films don't have that soul. When people are being paid

extravagant amounts of money, you lose something."

The amazing Scottish landscape is as much a character in *Lord* as the people, and was a free resource Wood was thrilled to have at his doorstep. "We had one block of shooting for five days I really enjoyed: We filmed in gold mines in Tyndrum, and went through Glencoe and the Old Man of Storr on the Isle of Skye; we shot there before *Prometheus*. We arrived and someone said, 'There's a big production here next month,' but we were there first [laughs]. Then on to Inverness and The Black Isle, so we covered a lot of Scotland in that week. The scenery gave the film a very rich look, and added so much production value."

Wood has a script for *Sawney: The Legend* (which would be a much larger period piece) ready to go, but is keen to get one more low-budget horror project under his belt. "I'd prefer to tackle another small one first and try shooting for 30 days straight, instead of spreading it over a long period of time." For now, he's happy that his maiden voyage is seeing release in the U.S. "It's great to have all that interest, because some movies only get distribution in their own territory. This is our first time, so we're learning so much as we go."

—Henry Northmore

What are your chances of survival if you fall into the hands of *Lord of Darkness*' Sawney Bean (David Hayman)?



Photo: Copyright Philabeg Films

"JUG FACE" Assault and pottery

Deep in the woods of Tennessee, there exists a small, insular community with its own unusual and sometimes frightening customs. They live under the worshipful sway of a being that resides in a pit in the middle of the forest, and claims human sacrifices determined by the faces sculpted by a blind potter onto his clay vessels. Young Ada (Lauren Ashley Carter) is fated to be next into the hole, and if that isn't enough to concern her, she's also pregnant, and suspects her brother Jessaby (Daniel Manche) is the father. Where can she turn for help when her own family are those whom tradition dictates must feed her to evil?

The positioning of its heroine as a member of the group that would send her to her death is one of the things that makes *Jug Face*, the writing/directing debut of Chad Crawford Kinkle, stand out in the subgenre of backwoods horror. It was this quality that attracted producer Andrew van den Houten, who had previously explored rural terror-tory in *Offspring* and its follow-up *The Woman*, to the project. "What I loved about *Jug Face* was that the perspective was always within the community, instead of seen from outside," he says. "It was nice to see something told that way, rather than turning into a clichéd plot about freaky hillbillies attacking young

kids who are out backpacking, or whatever."

The script for *Jug Face*, which debuts on Ultra VOD July 8 via Gravitas Ventures, followed by regular VOD as well as theatrical play courtesy of van den Houten's Modernciné company August 9, won Kinkle the Grand Prize Screenplay Award at the 2011 Slamdance Film Festival, and is described by the producer as "something like *Winter's Bone* meets Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery,' if you will. It appealed to me because it dealt with the fabric of America, which [his film] *The Girl Next Door*, *Offspring* and *The Woman* do as well. It had an original and distinctive voice, and of course a kind of creature/supernatural element, which I enjoyed playing with in *Headspace* and *Ghoul*.

"In terms of letting Chad direct, that was a big challenge, because he had never directed anything," van den Houten, who produced the film with Robert Tonino, continues. "So I asked him on the phone point-blank, 'Do you have anything you can show me?' And he said, 'Next weekend I'm taking my award money from Slamdance and shooting a short film.' And sure enough, he made this little movie called *Organ Grinder*, and it was fantastic. I was blown away not only by his direction, but the production values were very strong given what he had spent on it. He was undeniably the guy for the project."

The producer didn't look far to cast *Jug Face*, which amounted in one way to a *Headspace* reunion: New York horror mogul Larry Fessenden and Sean (Blade Runner) Young play the parents of Manche's character—just as they did in van den Houten's earlier film—as well as Ada. The enigmatic jugmaker Dawai is portrayed by Sean Brid-

gers from *The Woman*, and Carter, who had a supporting role in that film, comes into her own as the heroine. "I stepped in during the casting process pretty aggressively," van den Houten admits, "and proposed a bunch of Modernciné regulars whom Chad was also a fan of. It was an organic process that unfolded very naturally. As a producer, the ability to bring in Chris Heinrich, one of my past focus pullers who was itching to DP a feature, to shoot *Jug Face* was a perfect example of creative forces coming together."

During the shoot, van den Houten continues, "I was very actively involved on set, though what I've come to learn and believe since I started working with Lucky McKee is that the producer and director really need to be separate. I knew I didn't want to direct this film, because Chad wrote the script; it was his story, his voice, and he had a vision for it. There were times I fought to have them shoot more creature footage, but in the end, everything paid off. All the decisions we made were incredibly strong, I believe."

Festival audiences have agreed so far, receiving *Jug Face* warmly when it came full circle to this year's Slamdance as well as at other fests including Boston Underground, Scotland's Dead by Dawn and Calgary Underground. To van den Houten, that's a credit to the film's unique view of the milieu and its people. "There's something fresh and exciting about getting to shoot a film in that kind of setting," he says, "and having actors who bring it to life authentically, not playing it over-the-top. Everyone in *Jug Face*, performance-wise—and I truly appreciate Chad's direction for this—is matter-of-fact and almost understated in many ways."

—Michael Gingold



Ada (Lauren Ashley Carter) doesn't want to see her mug on the Jug.

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Grim and simple, the British thriller *The Expelled* (coming to U.S. DVD July 9 via Screen Media) is about a teacher under siege. Opening with an intensely grounded, yet maddeningly frustrating, view of politics and placating when it comes to instructor-student conflict, Johannes Roberts' film finds Robert Anderson (David Schofield) beaten down by the very system that employs him. He has lost perspective, cut off his family and taken to the bottle following an attack by a dimwitted young man. As both personal and professional troubles come to a head one night, long after the school day has ended, a ruthless gang of almost supernaturally anonymous hooded assailants breaks into his school and lays waste to those still roaming the halls.

"Many of the scenes and characters were lifted straight from real life," says Roberts, whose most impressive feat in this tense, contained thriller could be just how quickly and right he gets the bureaucracy that plagues many in the educational field. "I wrote *The Expelled* while I was a teacher at the same college where we shot the movie."

While he was inspired by reality, Roberts maintains that the payoff of his dark story was a reaction to similar films being overly severe in their worldview. "Oddly, the whole ending came out of going into films like *Eden Lake* and *The Strangers*, or even *It's a Wonderful Life*, and being frustrated at taking a journey with those characters, only to find that none of them survived," he says. "That seemed unnecessarily nihilistic, like they tricked you by doing that for no reason other than that they could. I feel *The Expelled* has a real emotional payoff. Robert achieves his goal of proving he is a real father. But at what a cost! It has to be said the ending has totally—and not intentionally—divided people."

A good deal of the film sees Robert both fending off attacks and searching for his teen daughter Kate (Eliza Bennett) in the various halls, rooms and closets of the empty, and thus inherently creepy, school. Roberts, who has had a varied career in the genre so far—most recently tackling the creature feature *Storage 24*—is at his most effective here, showcasing the taut, frightening effects of random violence. It makes one wonder if the film is reflective of his own fears; after all, *The Expelled* certainly isn't the first UK production to explore the close-to-home subject of hooded thugs and youth violence.

"It was not really my aim to discuss 'broken Britain' politics in *The Expelled*," he responds. "My premise was, what if a teacher

"THE EXPELLED" F for fatalities

became terrified of his students, and one day finds himself faced with his greatest fear? I used the hoodie image as a visual conceit, not a statement.

"*The Expelled* is in many ways a remake of *Assault on Precinct 13*," he continues. "My interest wasn't in examining the gang, but the people inside the school. It was very influenced by Asian horror as well, like *The Grudge*. A lot of people hate that the tone is almost supernatural, but I love it. To Robert, these kids really are demons. I got some early criticism about the arbitrary nature of

the violence; then the London riots happened, and it felt like I was living in *The Expelled*!"

Or in *F*, as the film was titled in Britain. Asked whether the moniker change is frustrating, Roberts laughs, "I was amazed it was released as *F* in so much of the

world—the most uncommercial title ever! We had a really tough time getting a U.S. distributor because of the film's themes. I was very pleased that Screen Media took it, because one of the main people at the company is an old friend, who in fact helped start my career by getting me my first-ever distribution deal on my first movie [*Diagnosis*, a.k.a. *Sanitarium*] 15 years ago. I actually believe *The Expelled* is a pretty cool title—certainly better than *A+ Assassins*, which was suggested at one point! I once changed the title of a film I did from *Alice to Hellbreeder*, so I'm pretty laid-back about these things."

An intensely active filmmaker, Roberts speaks to Fango while on location in India, and reveals that *The Expelled* has only kicked him into a higher gear. "It totally changed my career, so I have been working non-stop since then. *Storage 24* came out in the U.S. earlier this year, and I'm shooting a ghost story for this Indian studio later in the summer. It's a great script that has shades of *Pet Sematary*. And then I film a shark movie set entirely underwater, called *47 Meters Down*, in January. I owe *The Expelled* everything."

—Samuel Zimmerman



Photo: Copyright Gatlin Pictures

You could argue that *The Expelled* takes a pretty black-and-white view of school violence.

FEARFILMFORECAST

June 28: *Byzantium* (limited), *100 Bloody Acres* (limited)

July 12: *Pacific Rim* (3D), *VIH/IS/2* (limited)

July 19: *The Conjuring*, *Grabbers* (limited), *R.I.P.D.*

July 26: *Frankenstein's Army* (limited)

August 2: *Cockneys vs. Zombies* (limited)

Aug. 21: *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*

Aug. 23: *You're Next*

Aug. 30: *Satanic*

September 13: *Insidious Chapter 2*

October 11: *Where the Devil Hides*, *Haunts*

Oct. 18: *Carrie* (remake)

Oct. 25: *Paranormal Activity 5*

January 1, 2014: *Devil's Due*

Jan. 3, 2014: *The Amityville Horror: The Lost Tapes*

Jan. 10, 2014: *Ghosts*

Jan. 24, 2014: *I, Frankenstein*

February 14, 2014: *Vampire Academy: Blood Sisters*

March 28, 2014: *A Haunted House 2*

May 16, 2014: *Godzilla* (3D)

August 8, 2014: *Dracula*

September 12, 2014: *Resident Evil 6*

January 16, 2015: *Beware the Night*

Undated: *All the Boys Love Mandy Lane* (limited), *Area 51*, *Cheap Thrills* (limited), *Clown*, *Crimson Peak*, *Dracula 3D* (limited), *Haunter* (limited), *Hell Baby*, *Hellbenders* (3D; limited), *Here Comes the Devil* (limited), *Horns*, *Jurassic Park 4* (3D), *Mercy*, *Milo* (limited), *Nurse* (3D), *Oculus*, *Only Lovers Left Alive* (limited), *Ouija*, *The Sacramento*, *7500*, *Solace*, *We Are What We Are* (limited)

Note: Most release dates are tentative and subject to change. See www.fangoria.com for the latest updates.



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JUNE/JULY HIGHLIGHTS

NEW MOVIES

- ❑ **AMERICAN MARY (XLRator, June 18):** Katharine Isabelle will knock you out as a med student turned body modifier, on DVD and Blu-ray with commentary by writer/directors the

strange road trip with David Lynchian overtones and plenty of nasty/violent moments, on DVD and Blu-ray.

- ❑ **6 SOULS (Anchor Bay, July 2):** Not a new movie, really; Måns Mårlind and Björn Stein's study of psychiatrist Julianne Moore and her patient Jonathan Rhys Meyers' scary split personalities spent unwarranted time on the shelf before hitting theaters and now DVD and Blu-ray.

- ❑ **SOLOMON KANE (Anchor Bay, July 16):** James Purefoy is the 16th-century demon slayer in Michael J. Bassett's dark fantasy, on DVD and Blu-ray with commentary, interviews, a deleted scene, etc.

- ❑ **TWIXT (Fox, July 30):** Francis Ford Coppola returns to screen fear, casting Val Kilmer as a writer looking into a case involving the ghost of a young girl (Elle Fanning), on DVD and Blu-ray with a making-of documentary and more.

- ❑ **WOULD YOU RATHER (IFC/MPI, July 9):** Desperate for money, Brittany Snow attends a party hosted by Jeffrey Combs, who forces his guests into increasingly deadly games. Directed by David Guy Levy, on DVD and Blu-ray.

FOREIGN FRIGHTS

- ❑ **ADAM CHAPLIN: VIOLENT AVENGER (Autonomy, June 18):** Italian writer/director Emanuele De Santi takes the title role of a man who seeks demonic vengeance against the mob boss responsible for his wife's death. With featurettes.

- ❑ **BLOOD RUNS COLD (Vivendi, July 2):** In the chilling wilds of Sweden, director/co-writer Sonny Laguna strands a musician and her friends at a cabin where a killer comes to prey on them. Includes a making-of piece.

- ❑ **CRAWL-SPACE (IFC/MPI, June 25):** Australian FX

wizard Justin Dix makes his feature directorial debut, sending soldiers into an underground government facility where biomechanical horror awaits.

- ❑ **THE EXPELLED (Screen Media, July 9):** See page 10. With a behind-the-scenes segment.

- ❑ **LORD OF DARKNESS (Lionsgate, June 25):** See page 8. Includes deleted scenes and outtakes.

- ❑ **TOWER BLOCK (Shout! Factory, July 2):** The witnesses to murder in a London apartment house become the targets of a ruthless sniper in James Nunn and Ronnie Thompson's urban frightener, on DVD and Blu-ray.

OLDIES

- ❑ **BLACK SABBATH (Kino Classics, July 16):** Remastered DVD and Blu-ray releases of Mario Bava's classic in the original uncut Italian-language version, with Boris Karloff presenting three terror tales and starring in one.

- ❑ **THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE (Criterion, July 30):** See page 26. Includes commentary, interviews, new featurettes, production art, etc.

- ❑ **THE FOG (Shout! Factory, July 30):** John Carpenter's ghostly classic creeps back in on a new DVD and Blu-ray with fresh commentary by Adrienne Barbeau, Tom Atkins and Tommy Lee Wallace, a Jamie Lee Curtis interview and lots more.

- ❑ **THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN (Shout! Factory, July 30):** Early, icky Rick Baker makeup highlights William Sachs' saga of an astronaut who returns to Earth with a disease that makes him dissolve, on Blu-ray.

- ❑ **TOWER OF EVIL (Scorpion, July 23):** Remastered DVD and Blu-ray of Jim O'Connell's bloodfest set on a remote British island, where an explora-

Would You Rather see Jeffrey Combs threaten a houseful of guests? We bet a lot of fans would.

Photo: Copyright IFC

Soska Sisters and the cast, plus behind-the-scenes material.

- ❑ **BLACK ROCK (Lionsgate, July 30):** Director Katie Aselton co-stars with Lake Bell and Kate Bosworth, playing vacationing friends terrorized by hunters on a Maine island. On DVD and Blu-ray with Aselton/Bell commentary and two featurettes.

- ❑ **THE CALL (Sony Pictures, June 25):** 911 operator Halle Berry attempts a long-distance rescue of a teen (Abigail Breslin) abducted by a maniac (Michael Eklund). Brad Anderson's thriller on DVD with filmmaker/cast commentary and a featurette, and Blu-ray with those plus additional bonuses.

- ❑ **EVIL DEAD (Sony Pictures, July 16):** The original team produced a worthy remake, directed by Fede Alvarez, on DVD with three featurettes and Blu-ray with those plus two more and a cast/filmmakers commentary.

- ❑ **KISS OF THE DAMNED (Magnet/Magnolia, July 23):** Beautiful vampires and one's human lover square off in a homage to Eurohorror, on DVD and Blu-ray with two different covers and interviews with writer/director Xan Cassavetes and her cast.

- ❑ **THE LAST EXORCISM PART II (Sony Pictures, June 18):** Ashley Bell can't escape the possessive force that torments her mind and body, on unrated DVD and Blu-ray with featurettes and commentary by director Ed Gass-Donnelly and producer Eli Roth.

- ❑ **THE RAMBLER (Anchor Bay, June 25):** Filmmaker Calvin Lee Reeder sends Dermot Mulroney on a truly

How does something like this even fit Under the Bed?



Photo: Copyright XLRator



They're A Little Bit Zombie, so they'll be perfect for this particular wedding party.

tory expedition discovers copious sex and violence.

TV

- ❑ **DEAD SOULS (Shout! Factory, June 25):** Colin Theys' made-for-Chiller adaptation of Michael Laimo's book about a teen discovering the horrid history of his new home, on DVD and Blu-ray with commentary, bloopers and a set tour.
- ❑ **MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 XXVII (Shout! Factory, July 23):** Joel, Mike and the 'bots work their snark on *The Slime People*, *Rocket Attack U.S.A.*, *Village of the Giants* and *The Deadly Mantis* on a five-DVD set with interviews and other extras.
- ❑ **TODD & THE BOOK OF PURE EVIL: The Complete Second Season (Entertainment One, June 25):** School and the supernatural are back in session at Crowley High, on a two-DVD set with deleted/extended scenes, FX material and more.

INDIES

- ❑ **THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF THE LIVING CORPSE (Anchor Bay, June 18):** The Dynamite Publishing comic series about a zombie with a soul comes to the screen in Justin Paul Ritter's CG-animated movie, on DVD (with a DVD-ROM comic) and Blu-ray.
- ❑ **ATTACK FROM BENEATH (Asylum, July 9):** Grahame Greene, David Chokachi and Anthony "Treach" Criss star in Jared Cohn's film a.k.a. *Atlantic Rim*; for the plot, see page 24. On DVD and Blu-ray.
- ❑ **THE CLOTH (Uncork'd, July 2):** A godless man is inducted into a secret Catholic organization to be trained (by Danny Trejo and others) to combat demonic possession. Written and directed by Justin Price.
- ❑ **THE DEMENTED (Anchor Bay, July 30):** The party's over for college

friends spending a weekend at one's family estate when terrorists strike nearby, leading to an outbreak of a zombie-like virus that sends the youths on the run. Written and directed by Christopher Roosevelt, with a making-of piece.

- ❑ **DETENTION OF THE DEAD (Anchor Bay, July 23):** A *Breakfast Club*-esque group of high-schoolers have to overcome their differences to survive against attacking zombies in Alex Craig Mann's horror/comedy.
- ❑ **HANSEL & GRETEL GET BAKED (New Video, June 25):** Lara Flynn Boyle is a witchy drug grower and dealer who ensnares teen siblings Molly Quinn and Michael Welch. Directed by Duane Journey, on DVD and Blu-ray.
- ❑ **THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF ROSALIND LEIGH (Image, July 30):** A man (Aaron Poole) discovers the haunting legacy of his reclusive mother (Vanessa Redgrave). Includes commentary by director Rodrigo Gudiño, featurettes, a short film, etc.
- ❑ **A LITTLE BIT ZOMBIE (Phase 4, July 16):** The groom's been infected by an undead virus, but his fiancée isn't about to let that spoil the wedding. With commentary by director Casey Walker and the cast, a featurette, bloopers and more.
- ❑ **ROAD HELL (Independent Entertainment, July 16):** Pete Jacelone, Alex Pucci and Draven Gonzalez helmed segments of this indie horror anthology centered on a decrepit motel, with extended versions as extras.
- ❑ **UNDER THE BED (Xlrator, July 30):** DVD and Blu-ray of Steven C. Miller's suburban chiller, in which two young brothers discover there really is a monster lurking where they've always been said to hide.

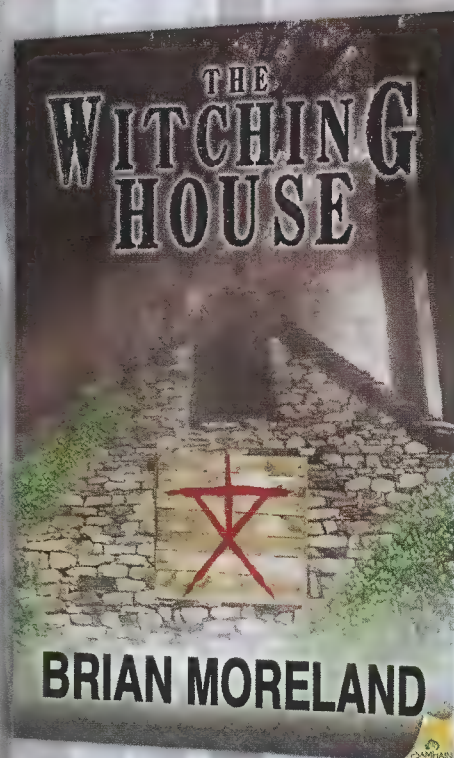
For reviews of more new discs, see page 62. For the complete, updated on-line schedule of DVD/Blu-ray releases, head over to www.fangoria.com/new/chopping-list.

—Michael Gingold


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BACK TO BALK

The exotic actress continues to practice many different crafts.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

With her translucent eyes, full lips and animalistic beauty, actress Fairuza Balk was a cult item even before she reached womanhood. Starring as Dorothy in the dark, belated and surreal sequel *Return to Oz* at age 10, she impressed immediately, and the (yellow brick?) road was paved for a steady career in respectable cinema, including a memorable turn in *Valmont*, Milos Forman's riff on *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and the witty comedy/drama *Gas, Food Lodging*.

But after her turn in the 1994 ZZ Top video "Breakaway," in which she played a coquettish vampire, Balk drifted into more intense fare, her exotic screen presence exploited in a pair of unique genre pictures, both released in 1996. Andrew Fleming's *The Craft* was a commercial hit and made Balk's sneering, rotten-to-the-core teen witch iconic among female fans—the ultimate malevolent high-school harpy. The other picture, the deeply troubled remake of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (started by Richard Stanley, finished by John Frankenheimer), was less successful, but its wilder elements—Marlon Brando in pancake makeup and a muumuu, with a diminutive clone, being a *big* one in every sense—ensured many eyeballs were on



Whether speaking or singing (as in *Armed Love Militia*, seen here), Fairuza Balk always entrances.

the film, and there was no disputing Balk's powerful performance as the gentle, fanged and tormented Aissa, a jungle cat mutated into a woman through Moreau's mad science.

Other roles, from her hideous neo-Nazi moll in *American History X* to her appearance in Larry Cohen's *Masters of Horror* episode *Pick Me Up*, further propelled Balk into the "bad girl" arena—a handle she didn't really deserve, considering her myriad talents and professional creative leanings. We may have seen less of her on screen in the past several years, but rest assured, she is relentlessly prolific, pursuing music, painting and mixed-media

"After *The Craft*, I was portrayed in the press as this dark, Goth, crazy, intense wild thing... It's called acting!"

art, creating a line of handcrafted candles (Vestacha International, with *Sandman* creator Neil Gaiman), while still finding the time to own the screen in smaller indie films like Christopher Glatis' recently released, ultra-dark identity thriller *Dose of Reality*.

FANGORIA tracked Balk down, and—because she's a Fango fan—the lady granted us this interview, not to harp on the past but rather to converse about where she is now, here, today: an artist with a keen sense of the world in both its beauty and folly.

FANGORIA: You have a devoted flock of fans who love your film work, but not many people are as aware of your brilliant music project with Bauhaus bassist David J., Armed Love Militia. Will you be revisiting that project anytime soon?

FAIRUZA BALK: Yeah, hopefully! I've always done music, all my life. My whole family are musicians. In the past, when it was all happening for me, my agents told me I couldn't do anything but acting, that all my energy had to go toward that and [anything else] would ruin my career, blah blah blah. But I still did it, and just kept it on the down-low. When I got older, I realized all that "advice" was just malarkey. You can do everything; one thing does not pull from the other. I met David J. from one of the galleries I show at in Palm Desert, because he had some pieces there, and we became friends. I played him a track I had, a demo of just me playing guitar, and he totally heard the bassline. So we teamed up, and that first song "Stormwinds" came out so fast. We did one or two passes, and we had a track.

There are a lot of people, especially young actors, whose reps have a tight hold on them. I wish I could tell them that it's a *good* thing to reveal and explore every one of your talents. It's all coming from



Judy Garland was a tough act to follow down the yellow brick road, but Balk nonetheless impressed in *Return to Oz*.



Which teen moviegoer in 1986 could take their eyes off Balk's witch teen in *The Craft*?

the same place, and so many people fall into that trap. But it all contributes. Your acting improves if you live a fuller life.

FANG: One can see that music in your performances, dating back to your childhood in *Return to Oz*. It's amazing now, with the glut of self-made "stars" on the Internet, how many of them are actually tone-deaf.

BALK: [Laughs] That's so true. It's funny; in a way, what's going on with the web is wonderful. Everything was so controlled before. Very few musicians or performers ever got the chance to share their talents, especially if they were trapped in a tiny town somewhere. But the web has given artists a way to reach everyone. Maybe the downside is that there are people pushing themselves out there, and they aren't at all talented, but their mom thinks they are and they have a lot of money and a lot of Likes on Facebook. I think—I *hope*—that the good outweighs the bad.

FANG: Are you on Facebook or Twitter?

BALK: You know, I am so computer-illiterate; I do things with my hands. I'm trying to be better at this. My friend who works in IT said I needed a Facebook page, so he built me one, and it's strange because part of you wants to be totally open and honest with the world, but then it's like, "Wait a minute...I don't know who the hell is reading this!" I tried to keep up with it for a while, but I found Twitter is actually better for me since I can condense it all quickly. But really, in a way, it seems kind of ridiculous—what does it all mean?

FANG: It means that everyone gets their personal validation by living a tabloid lifestyle...

BALK: I know, but how are you getting validation if half of your friends in these social networks aren't, and some aren't even real people?

FANG: It's a placebo. We all try to find a lie we can live by.

BALK: I know...I see that. I understand that. It's like on Twitter—people say, "Follow me, I'll get you 100 more followers!" and I'm like, "Come on, guys, it ain't reality!" It's ego feeding ego. I've got a lot

of stuff in my life that I like to do, and I get my validation when I make something beautiful and I know it's right. I feel fulfilled when I put the brush down and I've done good work. But these social networks are a kind of computer crack: You need more and more.

FANG: This leads to another question: You must have had to insulate yourself pretty heavily, considering you grew up in Hollywood. I'm surprised you're even on Facebook and Twitter! You must have some strange, extreme fans out there.

BALK: Oh my God, if you only knew. I mean, I not only have strange fans, I have actual, really-not-OK *criminal* stalkers, so that's another thing. People will tweet, "I'm at this coffee shop, gig, restaurant," or whatever, and I never do that because if one of those people shows up, I may not live the rest of that day. Generally, though, it's not too bad. I do get sexual-innuendo stuff sent to me, which is not cool, but more often than not, my fans are very sweet and supportive. But I've always been really, really private.

FANG: Has that privacy affected your career at all?

BALK: When I was in my 20s, my agents were like, "You can be huge! Just do the talk shows and all the magazines..." and I could see all my peers doing that. One day I was standing near a magazine rack, and there were people looking at a particular magazine, and at the time, there was this actress who was ubiquitous; her face was everywhere. And they were like, "God, if I have to look at this woman's face one more time, I'm going to puke! Stop shoving her down my throat!" They had gotten to the point where they couldn't even watch a film with her in it, because all they could think about was who she was dating and what she was doing—and I agreed!

I would much prefer to be known for my work rather than for my personal life. I knew that being the flavor of the moment is not good for you. It makes longevity less likely. Mystery is a wonderful thing about artists; the great actors I look up to, I know nothing about their personal lives,

and I don't want to. I don't need to know their other stuff.

So anyway, after that, I didn't do any of the talk shows and barely did any PR. I stepped back, because I wanted to do this for the rest of my life. I guess I could have been more famous, but I don't regret the decisions I made. I look at these young girls, like the ones who came out of Disney, and the insane amount of pressure they're under to be the characters they're depicted as. They take your name and make a brand out of you. After *The Craft*, I was portrayed in the press as this dark, Goth, crazy, intense wild thing, all because of...a role! It's called acting! These girls are so young, and when I see these disgusting bloggers being so mean, I think, "Shut up! This girl is like, 16!" I'm convinced that when a lot of these bloggers—and I'm not naming names—die, they'll come back as wood stoves or something.

FANG: The plague of stardom: the bitter blogger, the bored troll.

BALK: Yeah. I mean, it comes down to extreme cowardice. They can hide behind these usernames and they don't need to



Not everyone can enact enough of a bad girl to match the *Bad Lieutenant*.

answer to anyone for being horrible. All of this anger, this vitriol that they've been storing for years, their jealousy, this darkness...it all comes out, and yet they would never, ever, *ever* say any of those things to their target's face. I do insulate myself from that, and I've grown a thick skin. It's not worth my time.

FANG: You have this pattern now where it seems you take on either smaller parts in artier fare like Werner Herzog's *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans*, or indie pictures that give you the space to go wild, as in *Dose of Reality*. What are



The actress applies a direct *Dose of Reality* in this year's psychological thriller.



Photo: Copyright New Line

Balk and co-star David Thewlis seem as startled as anyone who saw *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.

your criteria for accepting film roles these days?

BALK: In regards to Werner, I am a huge fan first. It was wonderful to work with him; getting the chance to make art with a man that gifted was an honor. This is a cliché now, but Stanislavski said it best when he said that there are no small parts, just small actors. I have three or four scenes in *Bad Lieutenant*, and that's one of the movies people cite as their favorite of mine. You can make a huge impression in a small amount of time if you do your job well. I have gotten to do projects that are very interesting and that I believe in. I've been lucky. For me to continuously explore where I can go with acting, music and art... I want to keep

growing and expanding.

Dose of Reality was a great experience, and I hope people see the film, as I'm really proud of that performance. But I hope I get the chance to do a role no one expects. I've done dark, heavy-duty stuff. I would enjoy playing a more subtle character in the future. But it will happen when it happens. I like to have my fingers in a lot of different pies and keep busy.

FANG: Like making candles...with Neil Gaiman's beeswax!

BALK: Yes! Neil is an old friend of mine, and such an amazing, cool human being. The kindest, wisest person ever. He set up an apiary in his house, and when I mentioned starting a candle company, he suggested I use his beeswax, so I do. There

isn't much publicity about that project, but I hope to push it harder this year. You know, I have to say thank you, by the way.

FANG: For what?

BALK: FANGORIA has always been supportive of me.

FANG: Well, hell—anyone with panther DNA rampaging inside her is OK by us!

BALK: [Laughs] Cool. You know, people have brought me the magazine over the years and shown me things that have been written and features about my work that I didn't even know about, and it means a lot to know you guys actually care!

FANG: We do.

To learn more about Balk's world, visit www.Fairuza.com.



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THE NUCLEAR SUMMER ISSUE

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"Craft" Services

Andrew Fleming's *The Craft* (1996) is like horror-porn for girls—female friendships, black eyeliner, cool school outfits, magic, a great soundtrack, a hot love interest and a whole lot of witchy terrors. In the '90s, it was a young girl's gateway drug into the genre, much like *Twilight* today—only *The Craft* actually has serious cred.

The Craft stars Neve Campbell (seen in *Scream* the same year), Robin Tunney, Rachel True, Skeet Ulrich (also in *Scream*) and, of course, Fairuza Balk. Sarah (Tunney) is new to St. Benedict's Academy in LA and looking for friends when Bonnie (Campbell) decides she's the perfect choice for her witch's coven. Soon, Sarah, Bonnie, Rochelle (True) and ring-leader Nancy (Balk) are casting spells to get even with their nemeses. But their magic begins backfiring in dangerous and disturbing ways, and Sarah, the only "natural witch" in the bunch, must protect herself and those she loves from the power she's unleashed. After seeing the film, this writer and my friends were hooked, and we'd meet in the forest to try and conjure spirits. I only wish I was kidding...but I did get to speak to Fleming recently about the power of *The Craft*.

FANGORIA: Your first feature was 1988's *Bad Dreams*. Was horror always of interest to you?

ANDREW FLEMING: Yes, there were certain horror films I obsessed about when I was young; *Psycho* and *The Shining* were two I would watch over and over. I liked thrillers more, and I consider *Bad Dreams* and *The Craft* as much thrillers as horror movies; there's a blurry line between the two, but those films are much more character-driven.

I got involved in [directing] *The Craft* almost by accident; I helped rewrite [Peter Filardi's] script, and to be honest, after *Bad Dreams* I wasn't sure I wanted to do another genre film. I'd directed a character-based comedy called *Threesome*, but I really liked the idea of *The Craft*. After several drafts, I realized the script had become personal for me—I based those girls on people I had known growing up. I knew a girl who had been burned badly; she had scars under her clothes, much like Bonnie. I also knew a black girl who had been subjected to a lot of racism, and a girl who had tried to kill herself. Girls like that were marginalized, and I thought they were interesting. I thought, what if they were witches and had those powers?

FANG: I've read about strange occurrences during production. Can you tell us about

Fairuza Balk and the bats hovering over her? **FLEMING:** [Laughs] I don't remember that one *per se*, but yeah, there were several. Every time we shot outside—and paganism is Earth worship, so we were outside a lot—something would happen. Usually on a movie, you consult the weather forecast and if there's a certain percent chance of rain, you film indoors. One day, there was zero chance of rain, we started shooting and we were completely rained out! That had never happened to me before. We lost an entire day.

Then when we shot the scene with the girls on the beach calling the corners, we had to lay a gas ring into the sand so it could fire up. We

real. Fairuza knew instinctively what to do when we were shooting. When she auditioned, I did not actually know she was Wiccan, to be honest. She just came in and was so extraordinary. She's an incredibly talented actress and person. I truly believe there was more raw talent there than I've seen in a lot of other actresses.

FANG: *The Craft* has a great soundtrack—your use of the song "How Soon Is Now," originally by The Smiths and covered by Love Spit Love, influenced TV's *Charmed*, which used the same song. You had several cool '90s artists in there: Tripping Daisy, Jewel, Letters to Cleo, Our Lady Peace and Sponge. Did you play a

part in picking the music?

FLEMING: I've always had a big role in the music in my films—it's important to me. I listen to a certain kind of music when I'm writing, and that creates a mood I like to bring into the movie. I'd always wanted to use "How Soon Is Now" because it has this mood, this doom-ish feel. We decided to cover it, and that became a signature song. It was recorded just for the movie, like almost every song on the soundtrack. There is a Portishead song that already existed, but we used a special mix. I was in the studio a lot.

FANG: Were you surprised to receive an R rating?

FLEMING: It was a huge deal, actually. The studio wanted the film to be PG-13, and I was fine with that; I thought the story could be told without nudity or language. I wanted it to be accessible to young women—to girls. Out of caution, the studio sent the script to the MPAA, and it didn't have nudity, graphic violence or really any bad language at all, but they gave it an R! We were told that because the girls were teenagers and the film evoked Satanism, it was an R picture. We laughed, because there's a huge difference between the Wiccan religion and Satanism! We tried to reason with them, but there was no way. So we incorporated some language—since it was going to be an R, we went with it. I didn't think it was fair, and things are very different today.

FANG: What is your favorite memory of making *The Craft*?

FLEMING: I do remember it was a very difficult shoot. The actresses were young, and hadn't worked on a film that physical before. There were flying harnesses, and every week was brutal. We were shooting on splits every week; we would film on several different locations day and night. We'd start off at dawn on Monday, by Wednesday we were on day shoots and by Friday, it was all at night. The weeks were very long, and the girls were very friendly toward each other, but they got very emotional and tired. It's the most difficult shoot I've been on; everyone really pulled together, but it was tough.

—Lianne Spiderbaby



talked to a park ranger about where would be safe to set up, and we were far, far away from high tide; water wasn't supposed to come anywhere near us. However, every time we tried to shoot those incantations, the waves would come up. It was a very calm night, but the waves would actually get bigger during those moments. Ultimately, one wave wiped out the set—it was crazy. Everyone was stunned. You can actually see the waves a bit in the film.

FANG: Balk is Wiccan in real life—was she a help in terms of that aspect?

FLEMING: She was. She owned a Wiccan shop in Los Angeles at the time, and was very knowledgeable. We had a technical consultant as well who helped us write the incantations. I really wanted to be respectful and for it to be

TAYLOR-MADE FOR

THE CONJURING

By MICHAEL GINGOLD

Actress Lili Taylor returns to horror in James Wan's much-anticipated true-haunting opus.

There's no way Carolyn (Lili Taylor) will be able to dispel the darkness plaguing her home on her own.



Lili Taylor is an actress who automatically brings warmth and credibility to any character she inhabits, from her seminal roles in the late-'80s youth-film classics *Say Anything...* and *Mystic Pizza* on down. Her sympathetic qualities have served her well in her occasional forays into horror territory, from the philosophy student turned vampire she portrayed in Abel Ferrara's *The Addiction* to her heroine Nell in Jan De Bont's remake of *The Haunting*. She's back in an evil-infested house in *The Conjuring*, James Wan's much-buzzed-about follow-up to *Insidious*, opening July 19 from New Line/Warner Bros.

Based on true incidents that occurred in Harrisville, Rhode Island in the 1970s, *The Conjuring* stars Vera Farmiga and *Insidious*' Patrick Wilson as Lorraine and Ed Warren, the famous (and occasionally controversial) paranormal researchers who won fame for their investigations of Amityville and similar hauntings. Taylor and Ron Livingston play Carolyn and Roger Perron, who call on the Warrens to rid their farmhouse home of a vicious spirit that has been terrorizing them and their five daughters. (In the actual case, it was said to be the ghost of Bathsheba Sherman, who had been hanged as a witch

on the property.)

The Conjuring is Taylor's first horror feature in the 14 years since *The Haunting*, and she's quick to note that this was due more to lack of offers than to lack of interest. Speaking to Fango while promoting the movie at the New York Comic-Con, she says, "I don't know why, but I haven't been sent many [genre scripts]. I love 'em, though!" She adds that when the *Conjuring* screenplay (by Chad and Carey W. Hayes, who also penned *The Reaping* and *House of Wax*) fell into her hands, she was unfamiliar with the Warrens or this particular case. "I knew about Amityville and some of the others, but I had no idea about this couple. I didn't know who they were."

This wasn't Taylor's first time portraying a real-life person; she was Sheriff Lillian Holley in Michael Mann's gangster saga *Public Enemies*, Paula Klaw, sister of pinup photographer Irving, in *The Notorious Bettie Page* and, most strikingly, radical feminist and would-be assassin Valerie Solanas in *I Shot Andy Warhol*. While she says that research can be important part of playing such roles, she chose to forego it in essaying Carolyn.

Photos: Copyright New Line/Warner Bros.



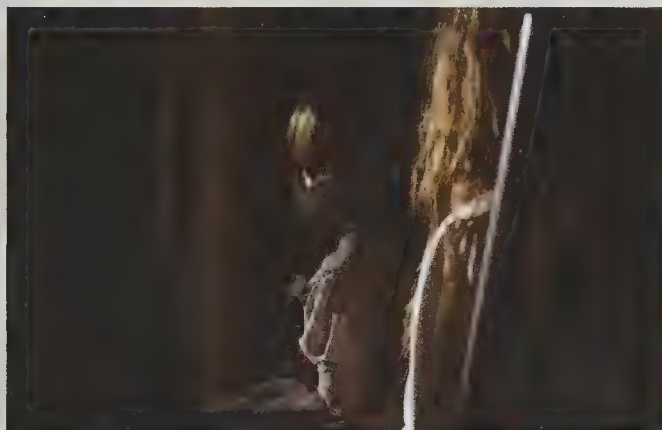
Carolyn has five good reasons, including April (Kyla Deaver), to rid her house of evil.

"Sometimes, when you're doing an actual person, it works one way, and sometimes another," she explains. "In this case, I didn't feel it would help me to find out more about them. I felt like it would weigh me down more than anything. When it came to the Warrens, I'm sure Vera and Patrick probably did want to get into all of that stuff, but I chose not to."

Instead, she looked to guidance from

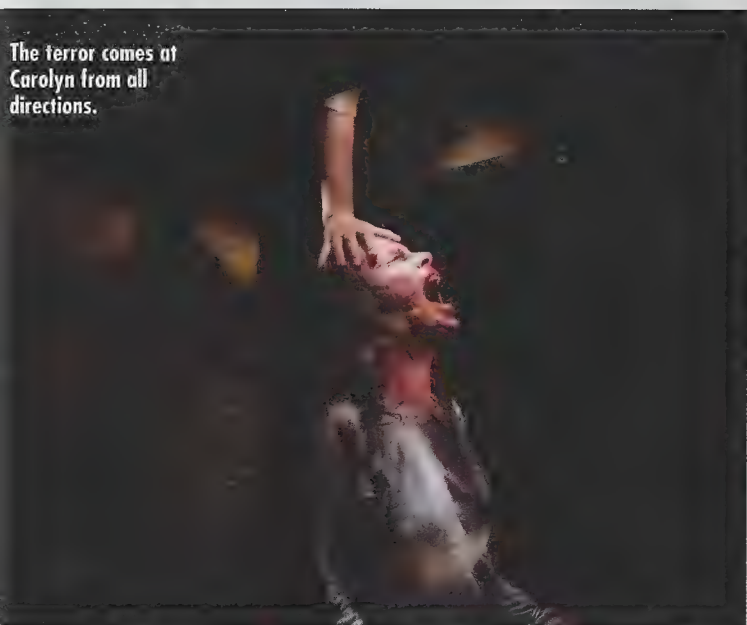


Ed and Lorraine Warren (Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga) and Carolyn and Roger Perron (Ron Livingston) are all real people in a film that bids to be real scary.



Director James Wan conjures up another spooky doll to frighten the living.

The terror comes at Carolyn from all directions.



Wan, whom she praises as “fantastic; he’s a total collaborator. He’s a great filmmaker, and with each project, he’s growing. He’s on another level now; he’s beyond the ‘Splat Pack’ for sure. I love his visual sense, and also his ability to connect with the characters emotionally. He gets honest performances out of everyone.”

Those included Livingston and the young actresses playing the Perron daughters: Shanley (*Detention*) Caswell, Joey (*Oz the Great and Powerful*) King, Mackenzie (*Breaking Dawn Part 2*) Foy, Hayley McFarland and Kyla Deaver. Taylor says that the relationships she had with her onscreen family “felt totally comfortable right away. It was great with Ron, and with all five of the girls. There really wasn’t a loose cog in the wheel.”

And as opposed to the megabudgeted *The Haunting*, in which the supernatural terrors were in large part created digitally, the more modestly scaled *Conjuring* went back to basics. “All of the special effects were old-school and real, not CGI. It was a huge difference. I prefer the old-

“All of the special effects were old-school and real, not CGI. It was a huge difference.”

fashioned way; it’s scarier, and makes things easier for me as an actor. This seemed more like an independent movie. On *The Haunting*, it felt like there were too many cooks involved.” A fan of such classics as *The Exorcist* and *Rosemary’s Baby* (“I’ll watch those a couple of times a year”), Taylor asserts that those practical gags notwithstanding, “With *The Conjuring*, there’s a focus on the emotional content, the relationships and honesty. It just happens to be a genre story.”

From here, the conversation veers into what could be considered SPOILER territory, as it gets into a side of the film’s

story (albeit one discussed in chronicles of the actual case) that hadn’t been brought to light at presstime. As the haunting of the Perrons gets worse, the evil residing in their home possesses Carolyn, which required special preparation on Taylor’s part. “Vocal preparation,” she clarifies. “Knowing how to scream is big for scenes like that—big. Also, watching exorcism tapes, and working out

physically. I mean, I feel pretty fit in general, but if I wasn’t really strong, I don’t think I could have done it. It was very taxing, because you have to go into an otherworldly state. You’re just physically in a different place.”

Getting back to the subject of consulting with her real-life counterpart, the actress adds, “I basically needed to get into my own thing regarding possession. Not that she could have told me much anyway, because if you were possessed, it

must not be easy to say what it was like, since you weren’t there, right?”

As we END SPOILER territory, the talk turns briefly to another recent horror project, which she shot not long after *The Conjuring*: the Netflix original *Hemlock Grove*. The series cast her as Lynda Rumancek, a gypsy woman whose son Peter (Landon Liboiron) is suspected of an animalistic attack on a teenaged girl. “It’s like *Twin Peaks* meets...something; I have to figure out what that something is,” Taylor laughs. “But it’s played for real. When someone turns into a werewolf, it’s painful. We’re not winking; it’s not camp.”

For this role, the actress did undertake research into her character’s lifestyle. “I love gypsies, and on a film called *Arizona Dream*, I worked with director Emir Kusturica, who is Yugoslavian and pretty much a gypsy for all practical purposes. Johnny Depp [her co-star in both *Dream* and *Public Enemies*] loves gypsies too, so just through that I’ve learned about them. And I’ve read some great books about them; they love talking about themselves.”

In closing, Taylor addresses the subject that always comes up when discussing a horror film based on true occurrences: whether the *Conjuring* cast and crew were plagued by any actual scary stuff on set. “We shot mostly on a soundstage in Wilmington, North Carolina, so there wasn’t anything like that,” she says. “There were some exteriors, but we didn’t really go inside, so that didn’t count.”

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FATHER KNOWS BEAST

Burt Young played bad dad to a demonized brood in "Amityville II: The Possession."

By LEE GAMBIN

Burt Young (best known as Paulie in the *Rocky* films) is a character actor like no other; there is forcefulness to his acting that can be either amiable and charming or thoroughly terrifying. It is the latter quality he brought to the screen in 1982's sublime but criminally underrated *Amityville II: The Possession*, in which he plays Anthony Montelli, abusive patriarch of a family tormented by not only demonic forces but also his oppressive character. And as Young lets FANGORIA know, some of the movie's themes were very hard to get over, particularly the aggression toward children.

FANGORIA: How did you land the role of horror's most loutish father?

BURT YOUNG: I didn't have to audition at all; [producer] Dino De Laurentiis wanted a mean, hardheaded guy who was stubborn and aggressive, and heck, that was me!

FANG: Did you know the history of the Amityville house before getting the job?

YOUNG: I did, mainly because of the first *Amityville Horror* that came out a couple of years earlier. I understood the place had a dark history, and that murders had gone on there. Then there were books about that place, and it was on the news for a long while. It's something Hollywood likes to do—take these situations and events and make movies out of them. The trick is to make them good, and Damiano Damiani did a great job.

FANG: How was Damiani as a director?

YOUNG: Oh, he was wonderful. The way he directed it really made the picture far scarier. I mean, the script was gruesome and frightening, but when Damiano got to the set and started putting in his own ideas, it got better and better. He made the walls of the house throb and breathe. He's one of the best directors I've worked with, and one of the most inventive. He just knew what was going to be horrifying on the screen. Of course, it wasn't scary while we made the movie—it was all of us making sure we did a good job—but when you have a director like Damiano, you really can't fail. He was very calm and relaxed



Anthony Montelli (Burt Young) gave his *Amityville II* family more to fear than the supernatural.

all through the shoot, and he handled the Mexican and Italian crews beautifully. He meshed those two nations so well, and the results speak for themselves.

Another thing that made a difference to the film's style was that we shot the exteriors in New Jersey—the Amityville house was built there—and all the interiors were done in Mexico City, so we were never in the exact Long Island neighborhood. When you're not actually in the place where the real events occurred, there's a sense of freedom where you can let yourself go and deliver. Also, Damiano is pure Italia! Many of the crew were first-generation Italians, so a lot of that style of cinema seems to creep into this movie. And then there's me—I'm Italian [born Richard Morea]! We have a built-in belief in the devil and ghosts, so it makes for a very honest film when everyone involved truly believes in those things!

FANG: What was De Laurentiis like?

YOUNG: I knew Dino very, very well. He was a smart fellow, an extremely savvy businessman



Photos: Copyright Orion

When *Rocky* sidekick Young moved to Amityville, he was the one throwing punches.



The cycle of violence victimizes all in this house.

who knew the movie industry back to front. He was also notorious for getting what he wanted, but that was never a bad thing; he just knew how to work. He was a very nice and kindhearted man. I still keep in touch with his family and see his widow [producer Martha De Laurentiis], and recently I gave her a *Rocky* jacket for her children!

FANG: Rutanya Alda [see *Fango* #317] talked about a cut scene where you try to rape her. Do you remember this?

YOUNG: There was a scene where I try to force myself onto her and penetrate her in the rear. Basically, there were subplots where each family member comes apart from the evil influence in the house. A little bit of it comes out when Diane [Franklin; see page 22] starts to enjoy the attention from her brother and the little

girl torments the younger brother, but for me, the devil or spirits or whatever haunts the house makes me a sexual aggressor who wants to rape my wife. But the producers didn't like this scene; they thought it was far too exploitative. They kept the incest between the siblings, but got rid of the anal sex! I guess producers have moral standards!

FANG: Was it challenging to play such a violently aggressive character?

YOUNG: It was extremely difficult for me, I have to say. One of the main reasons was the treatment of my onscreen children. I adore kids, and Anthony Montelli is an abusive, awful man who beats his children. The scenes where I hit the two young ones really upset me; it took me a long time to get over that. I knew it was just acting, but you feel a bit shaken up

when you do those confrontational, nasty moments. It was hard for me. The children were very sweet and there to do the job, so there was always a level of professionalism on set, but I knew this role was going to be one of the hardest ever.

You see, I work like this, all the time: First I get the script and read the whole thing; I never just skip to my character's scenes, I want to see how the whole story unfolds and how everyone relates to my part. I make notes and see how my character works and what happens to him. Then I decide how I can get there honestly by using my own ammunition, and hopefully it is what the

author wishes. Writers really need to be respected in this industry, and if you properly breathe life into the characters they've created, you have done your job as an actor.

"I knew it was just acting, but you feel a bit shaken up when you do those confrontational, nasty moments."

FANG: How did you channel those grim character attributes?

YOUNG: Well, I like to work at a relaxed pace and unwind before I go into a scene.



Someone is getting so grounded for this.

SATANIC SISTER MEMORIES

One of *Amityville II: The Possession*'s most memorable elements is Diane Franklin's turn as confused, degraded sister Patricia, seduced by her own possessed brother while her clan freefalls into demonic hell. We caught up with the charming actress to wax nostalgic about her most notorious role.

FANGORIA: How did you get the part of Patricia Montelli?

DIANE FRANKLIN: I remember screen-testing for director Damiano Damiani at this darkly lit hotel in New York City. It was an eerie atmosphere, and everyone was very quiet—probably because of the film's tone. I auditioned with the scene where I tease Sonny about the kind of women he likes. It was playful, but then I had to perform the confession, which was very intense. It came down to one other actress and me for the role. I was very nervous, but I knew if I relaxed and showed my vulnerability, I would have a good chance at getting the part. I looked young and innocent enough for it, but was also mature enough to handle the material.

FANG: What did you draw upon to perform such a difficult role?

FRANKLIN: The most important part of playing Patricia was that I had to believe she was completely pure and innocent. Whether she really was, I can't say; I just know that playing her this way made the story more poignant. I trusted my instincts, and I must say I did find her incredibly naive, but my job was not to judge the script, but to find justification. Sure, Patricia could have been played with more awkwardness and less sexuality, but by playing her with such passiveness, it was not only more realistic, but also made the incest scene more powerful. I played that in a torn, uncomfortable way, but not clear-cut. There are mixed feelings.

FANG: Who were you closest with on set?

FRANKLIN: Wow, good question! During the shoot, I'd have to say it was Rutanya Alda, who played my mom. We had a great time together, and she was so much more experienced than I was professionally that I really turned to her as a friend. Once in Mexico, I got to talk to Burt Young more. He was actually really funny and always joking between scenes. Although Jack Wagner was very nice to me, he had such an intense part that to get into it, he spent most of his time preparing, and therefore was more reclusive. Also, most of his role was done in heavy makeup, which took a lot of time.

FANG: Two of the most moving scenes are Sonny's birthday party and the one when you plead with him to listen to you and understand your confusion after making love to him—while he is being consumed by the demon.

FRANKLIN: The birthday scene was very intense. Damiano wanted very specific looks from the whole family, and for us to all say goodbye to Sonny as if it's the last time we'll see him. Remember, there was no music when we worked, just silence. That scene was done all without words. Time slowed down. As far as pleading to Sonny after we had sex, Patricia's confusion comes from expecting Sonny to react like a normal person—meaning if I could talk to him about what happened between us, maybe we could go back to being brother and sister again—but of course this is Patricia's fantasy. After they've made love, Sonny is no longer just her brother. He is taken over by the demon and becomes a stranger—the monster in the house. That is the center of my character's confusion. It's not just the incest; it's being totally abandoned.

FANG: What did you think of *Amityville II* when you first saw it?

FRANKLIN: I was shocked at how scary it was, but definitely thought it was cool. I really love Lalo Schiffrin's music. It made the film so much more terrifying.

FANG: Why do you think the film has made such an impression on genre fans?

FRANKLIN: Well, first of all, I never expected this '80s film to still be around. I thought it would just disappear and be forgotten. It's such a surprise that it is still entertaining horror fans today. But what I believe makes it stand out, besides it being so realistic and gritty, is the fact that it deals with the subject of incest. I don't know if any other film has taken that on in such a graphic way. You can't forget it.

FANG: You wrote a book recently. Why did you wait so long to do that?

FRANKLIN: I had just turned 50, and wanted to write about my acting experiences before I forgot them! My book is titled *Diane Franklin: The Excellent Adventures of the Last American, French-Exchange Babe of the 80s*, and it not only takes you down that decade's entertainment memory lane, but also shares an intimate account of my life as a teen actress. I talk about everything in a raw and honest way. Its format is that of a coffee-table book with lots of photos, and I also included film chapter ratings like PG and R, because the book is written for adults. If you wish to share it with kids, you can—just tell them not to read those chapters!

—Lee Gambin



I don't like to overprepare, or be stressed by outside things before I go in front of a camera. Being relaxed and clearheaded is very important, because then your energy and memory and passion come through. You need this to create a reality for yourself. Having a strong belief in the type of person you're playing is essential. I wanted Anthony Montelli to be someone living in perpetual fear; he's jumpy at the priest played by James Olson and nervous about his son. It made the character more pathetic.

FANG: What was the cast like to work with? Who were you closest with on set?

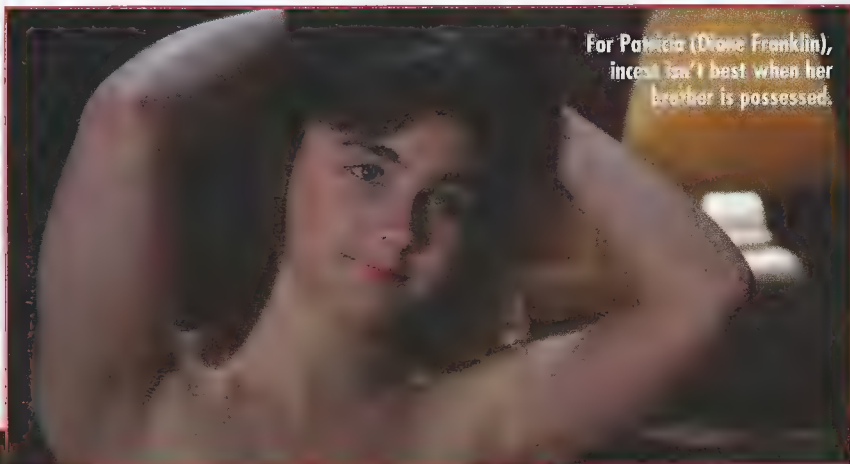
"We [Italians] have a built-in belief in the devil and ghosts, so it makes for a very honest film."

YOUNG: They were all great, but Rutanya Alda is an absolute sweetheart; she was always so lovely and giving. She's a remarkable actress with great warmth and honesty. And Diane Franklin was a perfect young woman and a very exciting actress, and I was always thrilled to work alongside her. Diane was just a beautiful kid; she was not even 20, I believe, when we shot the film, but what an intelligence, and a gifted actress.

FANG: And Jack Wagner, who is very elusive and impossible to track down—how was he?

YOUNG: He was fine, he was good—he was just very cerebral. He was the kind of young actor who took off on his own and lived inside his own head for a long while;

(continued on page 80)



For Patricia (Diane Franklin), incest isn't best when her brother is possessed.

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ERIC ROBERTS

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RIM SPECIFICS

Waging monster-robot war, Guillermo del Toro kept his distinctive personal touch.

By PHIL BROWN



Finally, an FX epic that transforms the giant-robot concept into a good movie.

Monster maestro Guillermo del Toro is a filmmaker whose career can be split right down the middle, encompassing thoughtful art-horror laced with genre nastiness (*Cronos*, *The Devil's Backbone*, *Pan's Labyrinth*) and gloriously entertaining epics flavored with intriguing ideas and images (*Blade II*, the *Hellboy* films). His latest effort, *Pacific Rim* (coming from Warner Bros. July 12), falls comfortably into the latter category, and proves that watching massive monsters smash major cities or humans piloting giant robots never ceases to make the 10-year-old in us all giggle with delight. Mixing the distinctly Japanese influences of *kaiju* pictures and *anime* super-robot smashups with the scale and gloss of a Hollywood blockbuster, it's easily del Toro's biggest movie to date, and potentially his most broadly appealing. Yet it's safe to say there's also room for his distinct personal stamp amidst the popcorn-shifting spectacle.

The filmmaker has spent the better part of three years crafting *Pacific Rim*, pausing only to supervise and produce a few movies like the unexpected hit *Mama*. What began as a deliciously commercial treatment by Travis Beacham turned into del Toro's first directorial venture since 2008, and FANGORIA had the chance to pick his

overactive brain about his feet-first leap into monster-movie territory.

FANGORIA: What were some of the giant-monster films that spoke to you as a child?

GUILLERMO DEL TORO: Well, I grew up at the right time, when *kaiju* movies were exploding in the theaters. We were seeing *Gamera*, *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, *War of the Gargantuas* and the *Godzilla* series in its entirety, and even the weird

UK, European and American giant-monster films, like *Gorgo* and obviously the Ray Harryhausen pictures. All that was a big influence. I grew up in what was probably the golden age of fantasy filmmaking.

FANG: Does Stuart Gordon's *Robot Jox* fit into the influences anywhere?

DEL TORO: You know, to be totally honest, I never finished *Robot Jox* [laughs]. I adore the horror stuff Stuart does, and I even love *Space Truckers*. But *Robot Jox* was a little dented by its budget.

FANG: What was it about Travis Beacham's *Pacific Rim* treatment that appealed to you, and what did you bring to it when you came on board?

DEL TORO: Travis is a great idea guy who imagines worlds that are defined by his writing. He develops a lexicon like "gypsy danger" or "martial tentacles." He provides an instant Polaroid of an environment that is very compelling. He did that on this, and a project called *Killing on Carnival Row* that I worked on with him for about a year and a half. I knew we worked very well together from that, and when I came onto *Pacific Rim*, I started suggesting stuff like the robots having two pilots joined by a neural bridge. When you co-write something, you share the work 50/50, and there are big influences from both of us in this movie.



If you thought *The Devil's Backbone* was impressive, check this out.

FANG: You've always created images with layers of poetry and meaning beyond the narrative in your horror and fantasy cinema. Was there room for you to experiment with that in a film of this scale?

DEL TORO: Yeah, of course! I tried to capture the majestic, almost operatic beauty of two beings that are almost 250 feet tall clashing. That is in itself a huge, artistic and surreal endeavor. You're talking about a movie where every time you talk about scale, you have to pay off your bluff. But then, and I don't want to spoil it for you, there are also moments of great beauty. Visually, the movie is incredibly experimental. There are moments where I went as wild as I wanted with the color and light, and it became this almost psychedelic pop experiment.

FANG: Were there any visual ideas or thematic concepts you'd had percolating in your mind that slipped into *Pacific Rim* once you started working on it?

DEL TORO: No. Actually, *Pacific Rim* was a unique experience for me, in that I didn't come in with any agenda other than that of a 12-year-old kid who was finally given the largest train set in the world. I have never, ever, on any other movie, enjoyed myself as much as I did on this shoot. It was amazing: Preproduction was perfect,



Pacific Rim is the biggest thing anyone's ever seen from del Toro.

20 years.

FANG: The monsters come to Earth via an underwater portal to another dimension, which obviously has Lovecraftian implications. Was that part of the attraction, since his work is such an inspiration to you?

DEL TORO: The portal was already in Travis' treatment, and is very much sci-fi-based rather than Lovecraftian. The *kaiju* designs are anything but Lovecraftian; that was very deliberate. I didn't want to bring any Lovecraftian influences to this, because I want to save all that just in case I get to make my *Mountains of Madness* movie one day.

FANG: Were there any touchstones you looked to when designing the monsters?

DEL TORO: Actually, I prepared myself by having watched *kaiju* films growing up and, starting with *Tetsujin 28*, being a fan of *anime* robots. I've been preparing all my life for this movie, so I didn't do any rewatching, because it's all engrained in my brain. There were certain classic shots I knew I wanted to do, but I also wanted to do a lot of new stuff. I didn't want it to feel like a homage; I wanted it to be fresh. That's one of the things that attracted me the most about Travis' treatment. I thought, "OK, 250-foot robots, 250-foot monsters—surely there is already a movie about that, and I'll come up with it in three minutes." But I thought and thought, and realized, "Holy crap, there



Idris Elba, as Lt. Commander Stacker Pentecost, takes his marching orders from only one man: director/co-writer Guillermo del Toro.

shooting was perfect and the postproduction has been a blast. I'm coming out of over three solid years of work, and I'm very sad to let it go. It's the biggest production I've ever done, and yet it was possibly as free for me as *Pan's Labyrinth* or *Devil's Backbone*. It was great to be driving the machine and having the studio trust me. They let me do it the way I do it. I don't do 2nd unit; I do splinter unit, and try to be involved in shooting every image. They allowed me to cast everybody I wanted; it didn't matter if they were stars. I've never had an experience like this in



Photos: Copyright Warner Bros./Legendary Pictures

Spawned from the water, the titanic attackers lack Lovecraftian tentacles.

isn't one." So I didn't want it to be a reverential movie, but something that stands on its own two gigantic feet.

FANG: You love your monsters, but was it difficult to find sympathy for them in this apocalyptic context?

DEL TORO: It's impossible not to. When you see a *kaiju* movie, you love both the good *kaiju* and the bad *kaiju*; it doesn't matter. The monster can destroy an entire city and be dancing the twist on top of a Japanese tank, and you still love it. That said, I try to love them by showing them in a majestic light. There's a terrifying beauty in how the *kaiju* come onto the screen. They're gorgeous.

FANG: Were you able to do any practical robot or monster FX, or

"I tried to capture the majestic, almost operatic beauty of two beings that are almost 250 feet tall clashing."

is that just impossible at this scale?

DEL TORO: At that scale it's absolutely impossible, but we did do a lot of physical effects. We used old-fashioned models in the shooting of certain scenes to bring the physics of how that works into them. We built three or four blocks of Hong Kong and destroyed them, as well as a Japanese street laced with a hydraulic system underneath that actually made the whole thing shake—the pavement, the buildings, the lampposts, the cars, everything. We constructed portions of the robots that were one to four stories high: a piece of a foot or head, four interiors of the head. There are many practical effects squeezed into the film.

FANG: Your experience at DreamWorks Animation must have helped when it came to all the CG sequences.

DEL TORO: Oh yeah. A huge chunk of the movie, I directed like an animated film—but we did it in a unique way. It was very important for ILM that I be precise while directing those sequences. We were doing it for about half the normal budget of a visual effects movie of this size...well, first of all, there's never been a visual effects movie of this size. Period. But ILM did it for half the original quote, and asked me to direct it exactly as I would an animated movie; we were very linear from the storyboard to the finished shot, and to this day we are \$400,000 under budget.

FANG: We haven't seen much of the people and their narrative in what's been revealed so far. You're not a filmmaker who skimps on character, so what can we expect from that element?

DEL TORO: I wanted to bring a different sensibility to them than you see in normal summer action movies. A lot of the time, they come with a political attitude that is a little jingoistic for me. I wanted to bring a more universal and far crazier sensibility, and that includes the human characters. I had the great pleasure of having Idris Elba as the leader, bringing his idiosyncrasies as an



It takes two to pilot the machines that are the only hope of saving us all.

"Devil's" in New Detail

An unexploded bomb stuck in the ground, a young boy's ghost with blood flowing against gravity from his head, an orphanage full of pint-sized Spanish Civil War victims, a corrupt headmistress with a mechanical leg. Those images could only have come from one filmmaker, and now that Guillermo del Toro's breakout feature *The Devil's Backbone* is arriving on Criterion Collection DVD and Blu-ray July 30, it feels like the film has officially become a classic.

The project dates back as far as del Toro's film-student days, beginning as a treatment for a screenwriting thesis that he abandoned before returning to it years later. "That version was very different," he recalls. "I kept a couple of setpieces, like the underground pool and the encounter with the ghost in the corridor. Some of the characters and the dynamic between the children, where they talk about sex and war and aren't sanitized but are real, gnarly kids—that all came from the initial version. Then I found a screenplay by two Spanish writers that had the bomb and the orphanage; the moment I read about the bomb, I knew that would fix my script, and it would be my next movie."

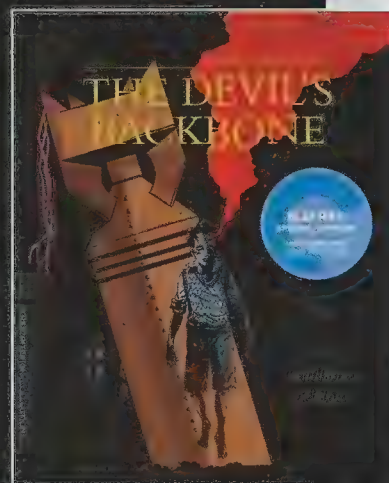
Made on a low budget while the director was still licking his Weinstein-inflicted wounds from *Mimic*, *The Devil's Backbone* ended up being more than just his next film. "It really is my first movie," he says. "*Cronos* was nullified by the terrible experience of *Mimic*. It was like a blank slate after that. What was great about doing *Devil's Backbone* was using the knowledge from having shot two movies, but also feeling like it was a rebirth. I was finally being produced by a guy who cared and truly supported me, Pedro Almodóvar."

Granted artistic freedom for the first time, del Toro was able to give his style full flower in *The Devil's Backbone*, defining all his

work to follow. "I wanted Sergio Leone days and Mario Bava nights," del Toro explains. "I thought it was really cool to do a daylight Gothic, in the middle of an almost Western world." The film's distinct visual textures and storytelling mechanics weave together a diverse collection of influences, ranging from comic books and melodrama to historical tragedy and classic ghost stories. "It's funny, because when I was growing up, that's what Mexican movies were," del Toro notes. "They were spy movies for 10 minutes, then horror movies for 10 minutes and then Westerns for 10 minutes. People ask me, 'What is Mexican about the movies you make?' I say, 'Me.' I believe the only thing you can offer as a filmmaker is your personality."

That distinct stamp has made him one of the most beloved horror directors of his generation, an honor exemplified by his having two of the few fright features in the Criterion Collection. To a man with an entire house dedicated to his fantasy/horror collection, this geek honor isn't lost on del Toro, who jokes, "For me, Criterion including *Cronos* and now *Devil's Backbone* is like winning an Academy Award."

—Phil Brown



actor rather than being a crewcut military guy going by the book. He's full of warm moments. Same with Rinko Kikuchi and Charlie Hunnam. And of course, Charlie Day brings all you would hope Charlie Day would bring to a scientist. The characters are very different from what you're used to in a film like this. When you're doing a genre movie, you can play with the conventions—but at the same time, you have to have them there.

FANG: Have you seen the trailer for The Asylum's mockbuster *Atlantic Rim* (a.k.a. *Attack from Beneath*)?

DEL TORO: No. I met those guys briefly; they were at one of the screenings and said hi. But I haven't watched it yet. Everyone has been shoving it under my nose, but... I don't want to get angry, and I don't want to celebrate it either. It's great that they did it and that they're young guys making movies, but I don't want to comment on it much.



"STYLISH, SEXY AND BLOODY"

Bloody Disgusting

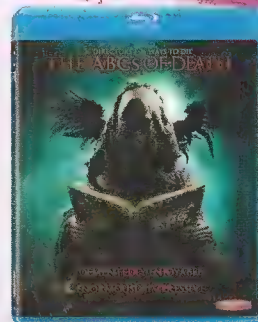
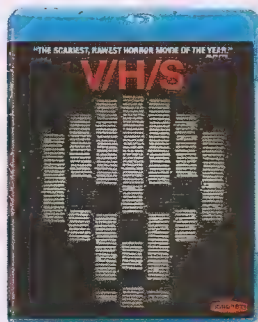
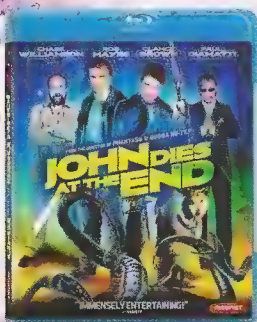
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GRABBERS

Drunk on Terror

When hungry creatures attack, there's only one, unusual but not unpleasant way to protect yourself.

By OWEN WILLIAMS

Donegal is a small seaside town in the shadow of the Bluestack Mountains in the Republic of Ireland. It has a rich heritage and a reputation for poetry and music, and the surfing's not bad either. Its name translates from the Gaelic as "stronghold of the foreigners," referring to its history as a Viking base. And it is now the site of an outbreak of tentacled Lovecraftian alien sea beasts. Donegal is where the grabbers live.

Actually, in terms of *Grabbers* the film, that's not quite true, since the Irish/UK co-production is set on the fictional Erin Island off the Irish coast. Still, it was Donegal that served as the film's idyllic exteriors, and its unpredictable weather dictated the circumstances of the difficult shoot. "We were filming during record-breaking blizzards," recalls screenwriter Kevin Lehane. In one instance, an important scene involving a JCB digger in a pit was only half-completed before a single night's snowfall buried the machine completely. "We just had to leave it," Lehane marvels. "It had to stay there for two months, and we all had our fingers crossed that it would still run when the

snow thawed. That's low-budget filmmaking for you! It was brutal, but fun."

Already a cult hit in much of the world and on the festival circuit, *Grabbers* finally reaches U.S. VOD and select theaters July 19 from IFC Films. It's been so long getting here that director Jon Wright has since moved on to his next project, the Ben Kingsley-starring dystopian sci-fi

in 2009, it was quickly picked up as a \$7-million production and in front of the cameras within a year, "which is unfeasibly fast for any production, let alone in Ireland. It's just one of those unfortunate things that the United States is the final territory. It was supposed to come out there last Halloween, but there was some difficulty with Sony having first refusal in the UK and wanting to hold to that."

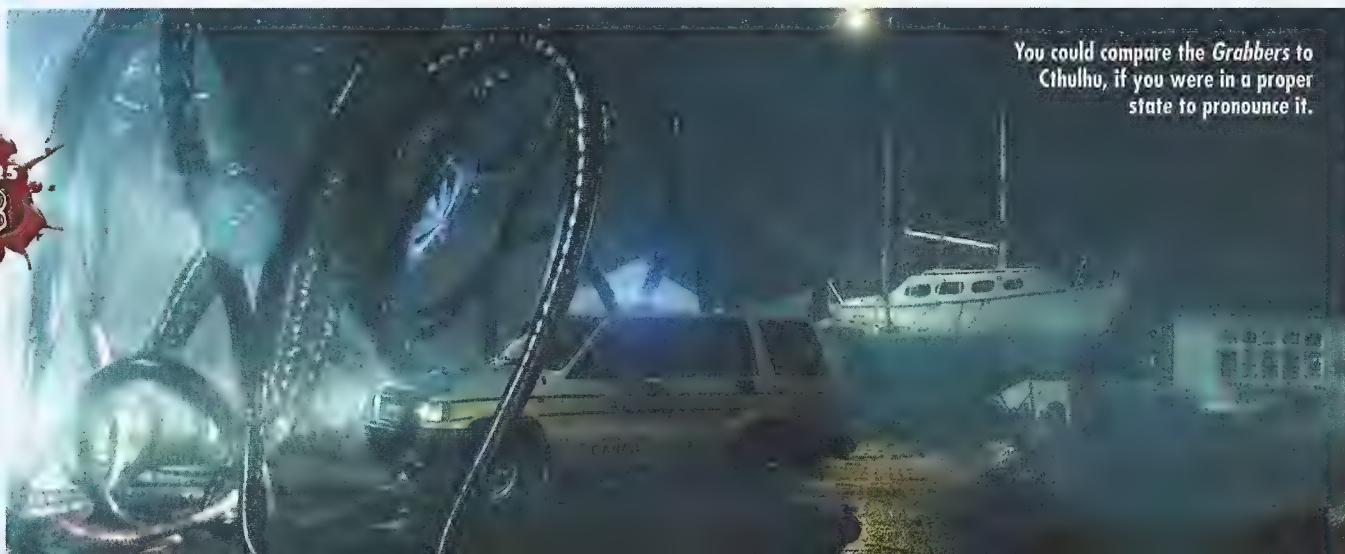
The film's popular success has also, ironically, contributed to its State-side delay. "It was so low-budget that it was already in profit as soon as it was completed and the deals were signed," Lehane explains. "The minute you have that sort of situation, producers don't place much emphasis on trying to make more money on top of it. It had already made enough, and anything beyond that was a risk they didn't need to take. So that was a complication."

Could it be that there was also some nervousness about how this determinedly parochial Irish story would go over with American audiences? "I'm not sure," Lehane muses. "We had our world premiere at Sundance in January 2012—it's been so



Dr. Smith (Russell Tovey), Ciarán (Richard Coyle), Paddy (Lalor Roddy) and Lisa (Ruth Bradley) face the sobering truth about what's happening on Erin Island.

movie *Our Robot Overlords*, and is unavailable for a spot of *Grabbers* talk. Lehane, though, is happy to fly the flag. "I feel like I've been talking about *Grabbers* for 24 years," he laughs. Written as a spec script



You could compare the *Grabbers* to Cthulhu, if you were in a proper state to pronounce it.

long!—and while it wasn't the best response we ever got, it was still pretty favorable and we had some very positive reviews. But certain things didn't go over at Sundance; whether it was idiom or delivery, we weren't sure. That was something we were prepared for. My big thing was that I didn't want to tailor the film for international audiences. I wanted it to feel like you were watching something authentically Irish—that if this happened in Ireland, this is the way the characters would speak to each other. I watch stuff from the States all the time and don't have a clue what they're referencing, but it doesn't matter; you buy into it and make all the right inferences. I think some people expected it to be like *The Hangover*, and it's not that. It goes back more to the school of *Tremors* and *Grem-lins*—those sort of campy, over-the-top creature features."

It may not be a monstrous *Hangover*, but inebriation plays its part. *Grabbers*' story involves Ciarán O'Shea (Richard Coyle), a washed-up cop—or *garda* in Irish parlance—living an alcoholic life in the uneventful town, until the locals start turning up drained of blood and decapitated. Alien sea creatures, it turns out, are responsible, and all seems hopeless until Ciarán, his conscientious new partner Lisa Nolan (Ruth Bradley), local drunk Paddy (Lalor Roddy) and scientist Dr. Smith (Russell Tovey) hit on the realization that the grabbers can't tolerate liquor. The solution: run to the pub!

From *An American Werewolf in London* to *Shaun of the Dead* and beyond, the pub is a staple of the British and Irish horror film, but was Lehane ever concerned about writing down to a drunken-Irish cliché? "I wanted to take those kinds of stereotypes and throw them back at people," he counters. "I'm Irish, so I've endured a lot of insulting interpretations of my countrymen, and I wanted to take everything that people 'know' about Ireland and use it to tell this very silly, over-the-top story, where we earn the right to have the characters get completely drunk! It's not like everybody's absolutely rat-arsed by minute 20. This is their plan; none of the police force in Ireland carry



Ever gotten so intoxicated, your head feels detached from your body? *Grabbers*' victims can relate.

weapons, so I thought it would be clever to have everyone take themselves off the menu by making themselves poisonous!"

An endorsement from the Irish Film Board was also important to the film's credibility. It was, Lehane says, "a stamp of approval, assuring people that this wasn't going to be a typical piece of paddy-whackery! It sent out a message that the film was inclusive, and not patronizing or mean-spirited. It was taking ownership."

With thousands of other monster movies out there, much thought went into making the grabbers themselves unique. "I can remember going fishing with my dad as a kid and him throwing an eel at me, and the terror of that slithery thing," Lehane shudders. "I wanted to combine that with a spider, and for it to be icky and really fast. Remember those toys you had as a kid—they were like octopi, and you threw them and they stuck to the wall and slid down? They're in there too. Tentacles are kind of entrenched in the modern monster movie, but I wanted to make sure we had a whole ecology, with eggs and females and the big king grabber, and create a new sort of beast."

For a low-budget production, *Grabbers* is heavier on the monster action than you might expect. "That's a credit to [FX company] Nvzible," Lehane raves. "It being a new monster really brought people to the floor."

The emphasis on the new doesn't mean *Grabbers* ignores its obvious heritage,

however, although not every homage was a conscious one. "There are deliberate nods to *Predator* and *Aliens*, *Jaws* and *E.T.* and *Close Encounters* and *The Fog*," Lehane confirms. "When Jon started talking about Antonio Bay, I knew he was the right director for the job! But I honestly

"I wanted to take everything that people 'know' about Ireland and use it to tell this very silly, over-the-top story."

did not remember that the worms in *Tremors* were called graboids. I couldn't have told you they had a name, even though I've seen that film about a dozen times. I was quite proud of myself for coming up with 'grabbers,' and then people started coming up to me and saying it was a nice joke or reference. Shit!"

So can we expect more, bigger grabber action in the future? "I doubt it," Lehane says. "There are so many people involved now that it would have to pass through too many hands. I can see us all getting back together for a different project, though." But he can't then resist relenting after all: "I do actually have a whole outline for a *Grabbers* sequel, which would probably be about four times as expensive...so who knows?!"



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IT CAME FROM BENEATH

Larry Fessenden takes to the water for another exploration of how nature can strike back.

By SAMUEL ZIMMERMAN



There's no question Matt (Chris Conroy) needs a bigger boat when something rises from *Beneath*.

It's the rare occasion one finds indie horror master and mentor Larry Fessenden not adorned all in black. It's not that he's an especially morbid person (he's quite genial, in fact), but as an O.G. resident of New York's East Village, the style suits his sensibilities. Mid-August, however, is not the optimal time for sticking to such wardrobe principles—and mid-August in the middle of a sun-drenched lake shooting a killer-fish film, even less so.

That's exactly where Fango finds Fessenden: on a barge on a reservoir in Oxford, Connecticut, directing *Beneath*, his return to television-centric horror after the *Fear Itself* episode *Skin and Bones*. This time, it's a full feature that Chiller TV (which airs it later this summer, following day-and-date limited theatrical and VOD play beginning the week of July 16) is producing with Fessenden's Glass Eye Pix. As mentioned above, it's a killer-fish film, but lest you think this tale of youths facing an oversized aquatic monstrosity will bear resemblance to a certain other genre channel's output, just remember who's at the helm.

Chiller, just beginning to earnestly dip into original production (*Remains*, *Dead Souls*, etc.) has made a bold choice in hiring the man behind quieter, more dramatically conscious horror like *Habit*, *Wendigo* and *The Last Winter*.

"I agree in a sense," he says when that observation is made. "Because look, I'm not the most popular horror guy, because I don't really go for gore and I'm not interested in camp. I am really intrigued by

exploring the dark side, and I'm obsessed with monsters. So I do love horror tropes. I'm just very honored that Chiller wanted to take this turn, but if you fall in with Fessenden, you're taking a risk, because I'm going to be a bit more somber in my approach. We always joke that this is an art film, because we're making these beautiful images. I love the beauty of the horror. It's all a big lament, basically, for the sadness of death and loss and the issues that interest me. That's what brings me to horror, not the arm getting ripped off and how cool that is—although we have that, too."

"It's cool they've [Chiller] been really supportive of the choices we've made," he continues, "and each one of them feels like a little bit of a challenge to the expected clichés on a horror channel. They've been cool and offered suggestions on the script. It was a really fun, pulpy screenplay [by Tony Daniel and Brian D. Smith] to work from, and I gave it a rewrite, which was just a way to get to know the story and what was going on."

That scenario sees six high-school seniors (played by Daniel Zovatto, Bonnie Dennison, Chris Conroy, Jonny Orsini, Griffin Newman and Mackenzie Rosman—the latter follow-

ing her old *7th Heaven* co-star Jessica Biel into horror fare) stranded during a boating excursion by the hungry, oversized fish. As the situation becomes increasingly dire, the teens find themselves sacrificing each other to ensure their own safety. "I had ideas about what we could do with the story," Fessenden says. "I pulled out a lot of flashbacks and other things that cluttered it up. I wanted a single-location movie; that was one of the things that made it appealing. I went to the writers and said, 'Do you mind if I make these changes?' I worked with them on the first pass and said, 'If we can make these changes together, then I'd love to do this,' and they were into it; they said, 'OK, that's fine.' I think they just wanted to see the f**king thing produced [laughs]."

It's evident by how meticulously Fessenden and cinematographer Gordon Arkenberg are collaborating out on the

"The environmental issues of my movies are incidental to the bigger question of how humanity interacts with nature and each other."

water—a production feat in itself—that they have no interest in taking the easy way out here. Shooting a tense debate on the small boat where much of the film takes place, Fessenden is injecting himself into the TV production—rather than being co-opted by it—and exploring simi-



Zeke (Griffin Newman), Kitty (Bonnie Dennison), Matt, Simon (Jonny Orsini) and Johnny (Daniel Zovatto) will have a hell of a fish story to tell—if any of them survive.

It's a cable movie about an oversized animal, but you won't find cheesy CGI here.



lar themes of how we treat both each other and the world around us. "What attracted me to the project was the sense that it's all about the choices these kids make in dealing with fate, which is to say this giant fish," he explains. "Obviously, I'm known for making a movie about global warming [*Last Winter*] and that sort of thing, but there's a bigger issue, which is how you deal with adversity, and if there is a parable I feel urgent about, it's how they respond to this menace.

"One thing we don't do is describe the backstory of the fish very much, and that's such a tradition. I think when you have that, you can kind of write it off as, 'Well, that was a freak incident.' The fact is, in life, there's always going to be the giant fish, and that's where it appeals to my sense of mythology and how we deal with facing death. Do we do it with dignity? In

a weird way, the specific environmental issues of my movies are incidental to the bigger question of how humanity interacts with nature and, for that matter, with each other. I'm always a moralist, in a way, which is a tradition in horror—though my moral isn't 'If you have sex, you'll get killed.' That's the convention in horror; mine is to bring philosophical questions to a pulpy environment. It's fun.

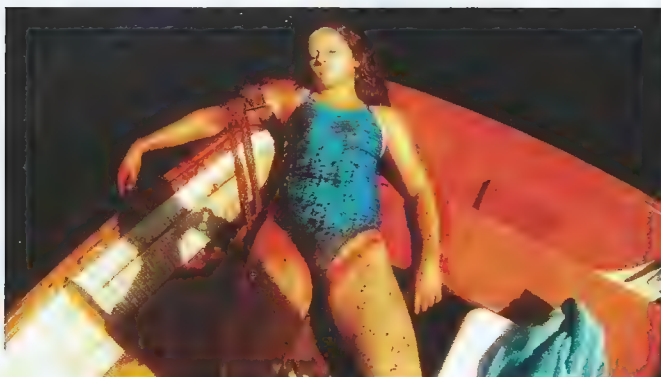
"The other thing is, I don't treat this as a campy story. The setup, which was in the original draft, could easily have been handled that way, with sort of archetypal characters. But it's much more nuanced in my approach, because that's the way I see life. I'm less inclined toward condescending to the characters. I've really enjoyed these actors; I brought them in and they've made their roles very specific. They're responding to this horrific, un-

controllable situation, and it becomes like real horror."

Beneath's tagline ("They're only friends on the surface") would seem to tout the ensemble's true threat as each other, a lesson learned all too well in Jean-Paul Sartre's 1944 play *No Exit*, which shares a birth year and close thematic quarters with Alfred Hitchcock's own confined story at sea, *Lifeboat*. Unsurprisingly, those weren't far from Fessenden's mind. "I grew up when movies were influenced by avant-garde plays and Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett, at a slightly different time. It was richer source material; even when you were in high school doing these kinds of plays, you were aware of some of the surrealists and existentialists.

"Hitchcock is my hero and mentor figure," he continues. "I love his way of talk-

(continued on page 80)



There's blood in the water—and out of it—after Deb (Mackenzie Rosman) is attacked.



Kitty is in the drink and fated to become food.

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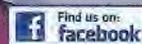
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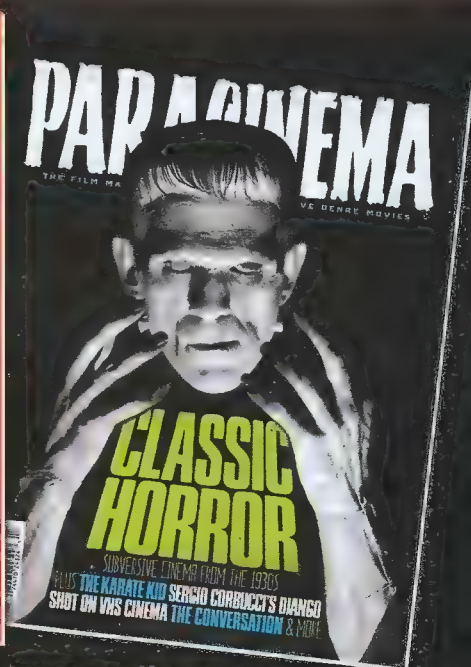
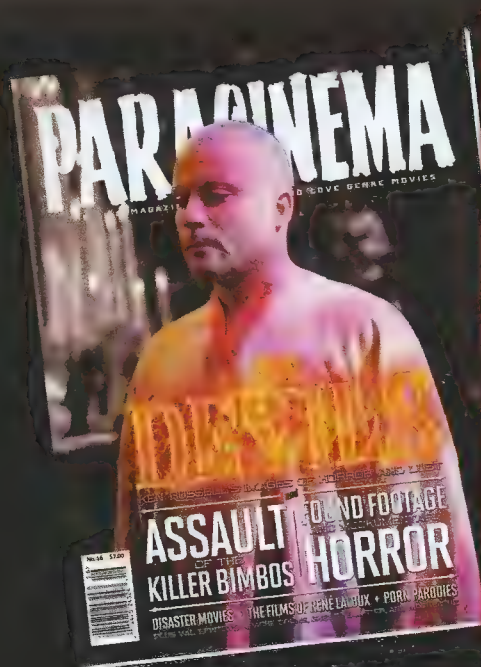
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In 1968, a gaggle of fearless men and women rolled the dice, opened their wallets and tried their hand at changing their fortunes by making a movie. The resulting film, *Night of the Living Dead*, was a cinema landmark that stripped the horror genre to the bone, sparing no one and inspiring a wave of darker, morally checkered, visceral screen terror, while making the names of its creators. Of course, they barely saw a dime off its success.

The story is well-told: Director/co-writer George A. Romero and his partners got screwed, plain and simple. Because Continental Film Distributors' alteration of the title card omitted the copyright, people around the world bootlegged the dickens out of the movie, spiraling it into a quasi-public-domain status that plagues it to this day and leaving Romero, co-writer John Russo and co-producer/star Russ Streiner forever scrambling to take back a piece of the cannibal-corpse classic they built.

Some stabs at financial reclamation, like the Romero-penned/Tom Savini-directed 1990 remake, were moderately successful, while others—such as Russo's ill-advised 35th-anniversary extended re-

edit—were less so. And while countless careless hacks have stolen the film or tried their own hands at milking its lega-

cy, it took a pair of Canadian kids from Hamilton, Ontario with big dreams and an unabashed enthusiasm for the genre to spin a new take on *Night of the Living Dead* while also honoring its creators.

The brainchild of Nictophobia Films honchos Phil Pattison and Christopher Harrison (Vs. *the Dead*, the upcoming *Devil's Night*), *Night of the Living Dead Live* is a loving, living, breathing recreation of the movie, complete with black-and-white set design, makeup and costumes, along with a top-drawer cast (many from *The Second City*) that hits every melodramatic beat, gently playing with the arch dialogue and oft-exploited us-vs.-them scenario without turning it into broad camp. Until act two, that is, when any hint of subtlety is blown out like brains from a ghou's skull.

Pattison and Harrison, along with co-producer Marty Birthelmer, brought Russo and Streiner aboard as executive producers early on, refusing to proceed with their pet project until the pair were part of the team. This in turn led to the big man himself, Romero, joining his old friends and giving the production his seal of approval.

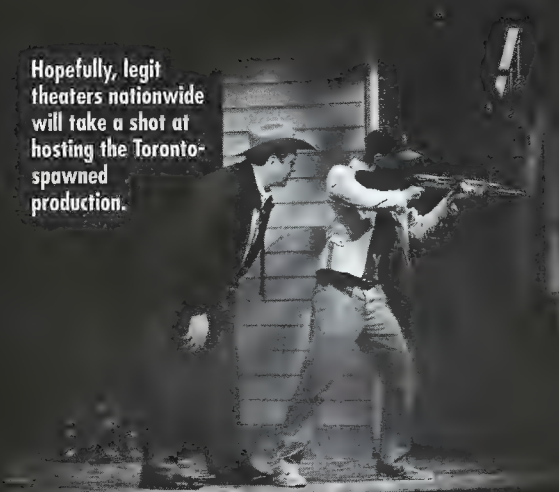
An all-new, totally authorized take on the classic film hit the stage in Toronto, sponsored by FANGORIA.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER
Photos by DAVID GOODFELLOW



They brought the dead back to life! Back row: actors Andrew Fleming, Darryl Hinds, Gwynne Phillips, Mike Nahrgang, Dale Boyer and Trevor Martin; front row: Marty Birthelmer, Christopher Harrison, Russ Streiner, George A. Romero, John Russo, Christopher Bond and Phil Pattison.

Hopefully, legit theaters nationwide will take a shot at hosting the Toronto-spawned production.



They were coming to get Barbara (Phillips) every night.

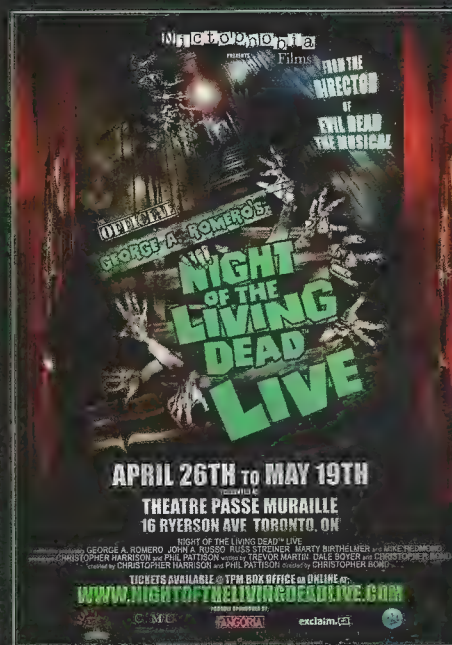
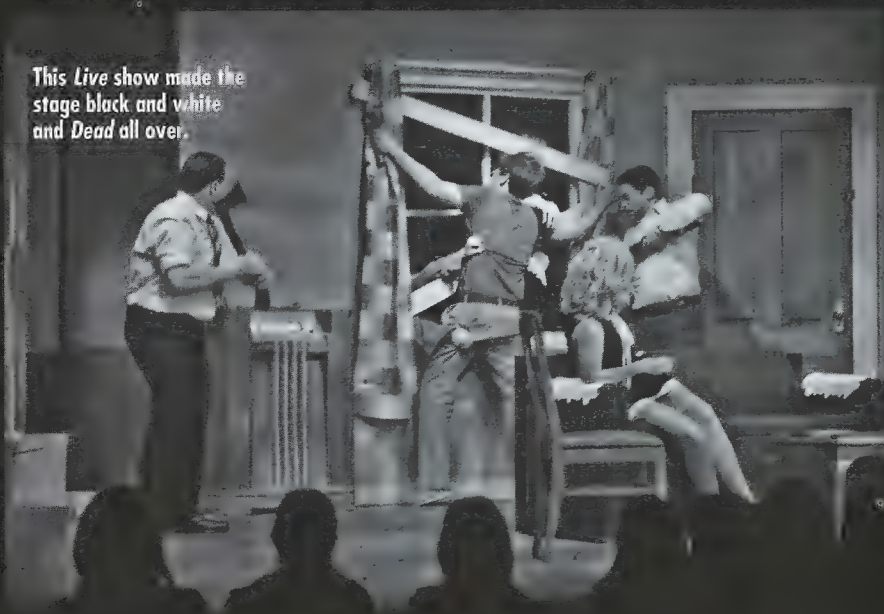


Under the buoyant direction of Christopher Bond, whose riotous, splatterific *Evil Dead: The Musical* similarly started in Toronto before infecting the world, the play opened at the city's legendary Theatre Passe Muraille on April 26—sponsored in part by FANGORIA—playing to full houses and wild, screeching response. On May 4-5, the ante was upped when

Romero (who lives in Toronto with his wife Suzanne), Streiner and Russo attended two sold-out post-show Q&As moderated by yours truly, musing on the play and giving a mini-master class on the history of their landmark film and its place in popular culture.

Spooky, silly, ingeniously produced, equally reverent and irreverent and driv-

This Live show made the stage black and white and Dead all over.



en by spectacular sound design by award-winner Richard Feren, *Night of the Living Dead Live* is truly something special, and 100 percent authorized by the "originals." Visit www.nightofthelivingdeadlive.com for details on when the show will shamle into your town. Lock your doors. Board your windows. Consider the cellar... 🧟

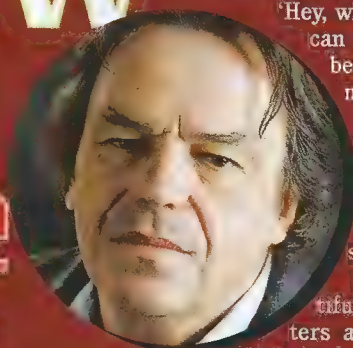


Fango's Chris Alexander (right) was on hand for post-curtain-call meetings of the original creative minds.

Interview With A Vampire Director

Neil Jordan returns to the world of blood-drinking with "Byzantium."

By AIDAN JOHNSON and MICHAEL GINGOLD



pire, who suffered guilt and hated killing people and was essentially a nice guy, while Lestat was someone who said, 'Hey, what's wrong with this? We can do what we want; we can be lords of the universe! Stop moaning.' Clara and Eleanor are not too dissimilar, really, and it was very interesting to make a film about two female vampires, from their perspective."

Playing this pair of beautiful and dangerous characters are actresses Jordan has had his eye on for some time. "Gemma Arterton is extraordinary," he says. "I'd seen her in various movies, in particular *The Disappearance of Alice Creed*, and thought she had such dynamic qualities that I'd love to get to work with her. I've also known Saoirse Ronan's work

Director Neil Jordan grew up in Dublin, Ireland, a city he still sees as haunted by powerful ghosts—artists and ideas that have shaped his macabre vision. Looming large among these is Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula* and one of Ireland's great writers. Jordan remembers feeding on Stoker's shadows at a formative, creative time; like twin red pinpricks on a tender throat, the impression the author made on Jordan defines how the director understands his own aesthetic.

"To get to the local cinema in my neighborhood, you had to pass Bram Stoker's old house," Jordan recalls. "It was a rundown Victorian mansion. To me, as a child, it was completely terrifying. So the experience of going to the movies always had a lot to do with passing Stoker's lair."

In his new movie *Byzantium*, which IFC Films releases to select theaters and on VOD June 28, Jordan returns to this land-

"I remember telling [the writer], 'Do not be afraid of making this a horror film.'"

scape, both literally (many scenes were shot in Ireland's lush and gloomy countryside, the setting of many of his previous pictures) and figuratively (the movie is a riveting vampire tale). It's the director's first venture in the bloodsucking genre since inducting Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt and Kirsten Dunst into the ranks of the supernaturally pale with 1994's *Interview With the Vampire*. Whereas *Interview* was a baroque adaptation of Anne Rice's novel, *Byzantium* is a darker tale, preoccupied with primal nature.

Byzantium brings a new twist to the genre: an immortal mother-daughter duo. The smoldering Gemma (Hansel & Gretel's



Who needs the Hotel Transylvania when Clara (Gemma Arterton) has taken over the titular establishment?

Witch Hunters) Arterton plays Clara, on the run from the vampire community because she has broken one of its key laws: female "succeants" (as they call themselves) can never create new ones. The bloodsucker she has made is Eleanor (played with hypnotic sensitivity by *The Lovely Bones*' Saoirse Ronan; see *Fango* #324), who is 200 years old but has the form of a 16-year-old girl. This is one of *Byzantium*'s borrowings from *Interview*: the spiritually and actually ancient being grappling with the fact that her body is that of a young female. In *Interview*, this paradox turned Dunst's Claudia into an icon of white-hot rage; Eleanor's response is more one of angst and moodiness, albeit barely controlled.

"This is a companion piece to *Interview*, in a way," Jordan says. "I didn't write the script myself, but it was almost as if Louis and Lestat had been reimaged as Eleanor and Clara. Louis was a reluctant vam-

for a few years. She's Irish, and we'd met each other socially but had never actually gotten to work together. So we met at my house and saw eye to eye on what this role should be, and decided to do it together. The two of them look quite different—one is brown-eyed, the other blue-eyed—and since the characters are so different as well, it seemed an appropriate fit."

Like Claudia, Eleanor strikes out on her own, falling in love with Frank, a fragile young man played by Caleb Landry (*Antiviral*) Jones. Frank haunts the dumpy seaside town where Clara and Eleanor hide out in the eponymous hotel almost as if he's a ghost himself—an effect that's as much a tribute to Jones' subtle acting as to Jordan's directorial abilities. Being a "creature" of the night, Eleanor's love for Frank is of course star-crossed. The vampire underground catches wind of where Clara is hiding, and hunts her and Eleanor with a burning vengeance.



Photos: Copyright IFC

Yes, you can see this vampire in the mirror—just before she cuts your throat.

As Jordan builds to the confrontation between the duo and their unforgiving bloodsucker brothers in scene after harrowing scene, a unique new vampire universe emerges. Although the origin of the species is never explained, Jordan suggests that the supernatural darkness of their world is mysteriously connected to

"It was very interesting to make a film about two female vampires, from their perspective."

nature and the elements. *Byzantium*'s vampires have no fangs; instead, they rip into victims with long, pointed thumbnails. Every time a vampire is made, a waterfall turns to blood. Some of the strongest images are of birds and water stirred into vortexes and cacophonies. Jordan gives the principle of survival of the fittest an eerie, poetic life.

"Moira [Buffini] went back to the riches of the original vampire stories when she wrote the screenplay [based on her own play *A Vampire Story*]," Jordan says. Buffini is no stranger to shadowy cinema, having scripted 2011's *Jane Eyre*. "Particularly, she drew on [John William] Polidori's old story 'The Vampyre,' which came even before *Dracula*. Polidori's heroes are two travelers who meet a 'thing in the East,' traveling to Europe. Some of the subtle 'Eastern' feel in *Byzantium* came from that," as reflected in the title.

The film drips with mood, making intoxicating use of British and Irish locations that were key to Jordan's vision for *Byzantium*. "I set two rules for myself when I got the script," he recalls, "and one of them was that if I didn't find the right place to shoot the film, I wouldn't

make it. The movie as a whole had to be kind of haunted; it needed an atmosphere like *Don't Look Now* had, the way Venice was so creepy and foreboding in Nic Roeg's movie. So I traveled up and down the southwest coast of England and found this little town, Hastings, that was totally abandoned and creepy and had that wonderful hotel and burned-out promenade, and I adapted what Moira had written to fit there.

"In the script," he continues, "she had described the place Clara and Eleanor went to as a little boarding-house, almost suburban. Then I found that hotel in Hastings, and just redesigned what she had written so it would fit. The film needed a great setting for it to work, and that place provided it for me: There was the wonderful lift and the strange, creepy spaces upstairs and the endless rooms. The Irish locations were a bit more problematic. I have a house down in the southwest of Ireland, in Cork, so I asked the designer



Flashbacks reveal the part the English navy (including Sam Riley as Darvell) played in the vampires' origins.

***Byzantium* sets its bloody acts in beautiful locations.**



and location scouts to come down there to see if we could find places that would fit the movie."

Another way in which Jordan brought his own influence to the material was in punching up the more graphic elements; the camera doesn't shy away when Clara and Eleanor spill blood. "When I read Moira's first script, there were very few of



The supernatural promises salvation for sickly Frank (Caleb Landry Jones).

those genre elements in it, and I remember telling her, 'Do not be afraid of making this a horror film.' It kind of wanted to be one, but hadn't gotten there yet. It was like she wasn't allowing the movie to have those moments of blood and shock that the genre seems to demand. I suppose I'm to blame for those elements—the garrotting and the waterfall of blood and all the violent bits. I just felt the story deserved them. This is not *Evil Dead*, and it's not as graphic as where contemporary horror movies go, but I felt it needed those elements to work."

Vampires were not Jordan's first macabre subject; his second feature was *The Company of Wolves* (1985), a nightmarish fairy tale that brought Angela Lansbury (another Irish artist) back to horror some 38 years after her Oscar nomination for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In *Company*, Lansbury plays Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother, and gets her head torn off. "Angela was incredible in that movie, and game for everything," Jordan recalls fondly. Horror also figured in the margins of his 1988 comedy *High Spirits*, starring Steve Guttenberg and Jennifer Tilly as American tourists stumbling around an Irish castle owned by Peter O'Toole and haunted by Daryl Hannah and Liam Neeson. It was critically panned. "You remember that movie?" Jordan

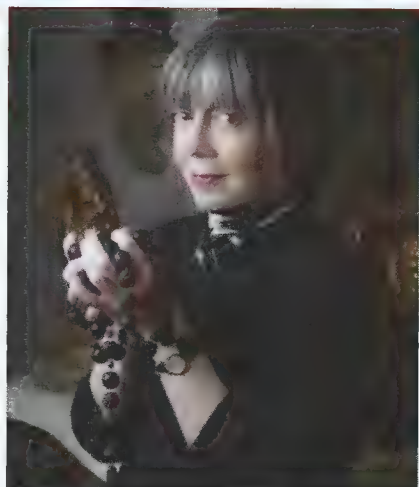
The Rice Stuff

Anne Rice is famous as the author who reinvented the vampire genre, and for her Gothic classics about the Mayfair Witches and—more recently—werewolves. She also adapted her seminal novel into the screenplay for Neil Jordan's *Interview With the Vampire*, and today counts herself among Jordan's most committed fans.

"There's a deep poetic streak in the Irish, as well as a belief in the supernatural," Rice says of Jordan's creative origins. "I know that very well, as an Irish-American. My father used to speak to the graves of his dead Irish relatives. There's a view of Irish culture as beautiful, and both benevolent and malevolent, and an old Irish love of ghosts. I think you see all of that in Neil Jordan's movies. There is poetry and gloom in Irish blood; I would auction my own, if that were somehow possible."

For Rice, Jordan's lush, popular historical Showtime series *The Borgias*—depicting the decadent doings of the famed turn-of-the-16th-century aristocratic Italian family, headed by Jeremy Irons as Pope Alexander VI—is directly connected to horror. "*The Borgias* is the most beautiful and sadistic thing I have ever seen," she says. "It's extremely dark and horrific. I recommend it to FANGORIA readers unequivocally." (Rice adds that she loves Fango itself, which is "one of my favorite magazines.")

"Horror and Gothic fans generally love costume drama, and for good reason," Rice reflects. "Historical settings are like an alternative universe, as in a werewolf or vampire story. As a filmmaker or writer, you can use historical settings in intense, surreal ways.



They're a super-intense canvas. So it seems perfectly right to me that Neil Jordan is the genius behind *The Borgias*. We are in the golden age of television, and Neil is the quintessence of that. He's come to TV as a brilliant film director."

Rice states that Jordan is one of the most visionary filmmakers in modern cinema and television, describing his direction of *Interview* as "an author's dream. I also loved *The Crying Game*, but I didn't need it to become a Neil Jordan fan in the first place. Well before *Crying Game* came out, I had *The Company of Wolves*! [Company was one of the films Rice rewatched while inventing the universe of last year's novel *The Wolf Gift*.] There are no compromises in Neil Jordan's movies. He's never guilty of half-commitment in his vision. He goes to the max."

—Aidan Johnson

groans. "I'm sorry."

The year 1992 changed Jordan's life forever: He won a Best Screenplay Oscar for that year's *The Crying Game* and was nominated for Best Director. That drama was a breakthrough for Irish film, opening the floodgates that widened further with movies including Jordan's own *Michael Collins* and *The Butcher Boy* (in which the prepubescent killer-hero receives disturbing succor from the Virgin Mary, played by Sinead O'Connor in a brilliant bit of stunt casting). "Reality has no value whatsoever in Irish culture," Jordan reflects with a grim smile. "It's why we do well with fantasy and the macabre. In that mental-

ity, every shadow hides something important. You see it in Irish folklore and medieval stories."

Those influences are as palpable in *Byzantium*'s brooding gloom as they are in the Stoker novel that helped define Jordan's childhood. Like *Company of Wolves*—and indeed like *Dracula*—*Byzantium* is a fairy tale in which the heroines stumble through a wild world, seeking meaning and sometimes—terrifyingly—finding it. Jordan sees this pattern as linked to the tenets of Irish Catholicism, but not limited by them. "You could say I've had a prolonged withdrawal from Catholicism," he smiles. "You can probably see it in my movies."



Eleanor (Saoirse Ronan) wouldn't hurt a fly if she didn't have to survive.

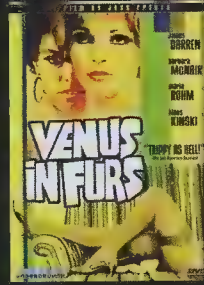
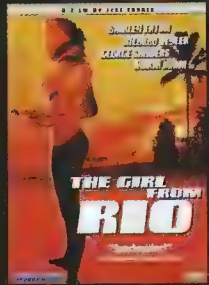
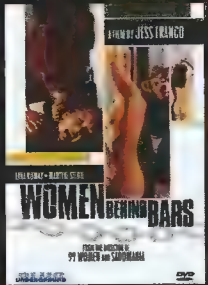
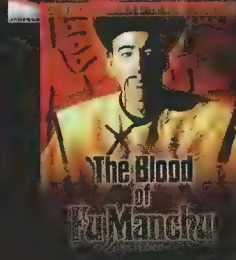
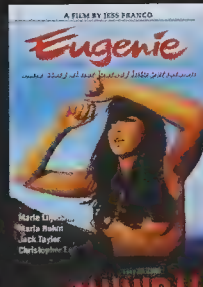
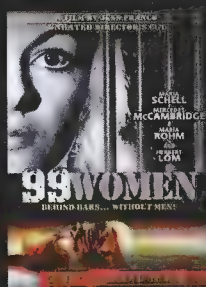
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My Friend, Jess franco

A memoir of time spent with the late, lamented Earl of Eurohorror.

By DAVID GREGORY

One of the highlights of being a DVD producer during the format's decade-and-a-half rise and fall was getting to know Jess Franco. Not just because I was fortunate enough to interview him for around 30 releases (plus a handful yet to come out), mainly at his home in Malaga but also in London and Paris. Nor simply because he and longtime love Lina Romy were buoyant company for post-shoot conversation across a variety of culinary adventures (including the night when Jess, unimpressed with our choices of Parisian restaurants up to that point, took us to an "honest bistro" where pigeon was the favored dish on the three-item menu). But mainly because it encouraged me to dive headfirst into the mazy filmography of a truly unique filmmaker: a fascinating, occasionally frustrating but ultimately incomparable and impressive body of work.

Growing up, I'd seen *Bloody Moon*, *Devil Hunter*, *The Demons* and *Sinner* on VHS, but while I paid attention to the makers of my early Eurolease indulgences, the mess of pseudonyms on Jess' films obscured the fact that they were all from the same depraved visionary. I caught more over the years, but it wasn't until I was researching my first Blue Underground assignment to interview Jess in 2001 that I started to put the pieces of this massive puzzle together.

The last time I saw him, just under a year ago, I told him that Fango was planning to dedicate a cover story to him. He was very frail, having lost Lina to cancer just a few months before, and a couple of weeks prior to suffering the stroke that would lead to his death, we had arranged to do a new interview by phone for this issue. Unfortunately, that didn't happen; the quotes here are derived mainly from two unpublished interviews I did with him over the last couple of years.

It never ceased to amaze me that no matter what film was under discussion, Jess always had no end of stories about its production, the personnel involved, good



After years of making films on the lowest budgets, Jess Franco received Spanish cinema's highest honor, the Goya Award, in 2009.

or bad (not holding back when he despised an individual, such as *Cannibals* actress Sabrina Siani), and the various locations they would hole up in to shoot their strange movies. Sometimes, when I've interviewed filmmakers about projects from 25-plus years ago, they would understandably be hazy on the details, but not Jess. Even after the camera stopped rolling on our long interview sessions and the room's oxygen had been replaced with smoke from his chain of cigarettes, he would continue talking about his passions for cinema, food, music, travel and people. When it came to horror, he had an opinion on everything; for example, he thought zombies and cannibals were stupid, but he had plenty of time for vampires.

"Don't forget that I come from the cinema of expressionism, and vampires are 100 percent expressionist. *Nosferatu*, of course, is the best of the vampire films in its direction, creation, lighting, everything. I find a film more interesting if it has drops of expressionism in it, like in

the case of Robert [The Killers] Siodmak and people like that. I would go as far as to say that without expressionism, cinema would have been dead a long time ago."

Talk would often come around to Hammer movies as his entry into the genre, and how he collaborated with one of their biggest names on many occasions. "Hammer films are pieces of shit. They are badly done. They are badly directed, badly produced, everything was shit. And I can talk like that because I spoke a lot of times with Christopher [Lee] about it, and Christopher agreed with me."

As scathing as this assessment was, the studio was indirectly responsible for the course his career would take, when his plans to adapt Bruno Traven's novel *Rebellion of the Hanged* as a feature were halted in the mid-'60s. "I wanted to make an important film. Just two weeks before we started, the censors f*cked everything up by saying, 'You will never have the permission to make this awful, revolutionary [film].'"

The producers would lose everything, because they had paid bills already. So my God, I wanted to help them. In a small cinema, they were showing a Hammer Dracula film with Christopher. So I took them both, like they were my sons, to the cinema on a Thursday evening, and they watched the film with me. They said, 'It's beautiful; let's do something of this kind.' " The result was the 1962 Gothic chiller *The Awful Dr. Orlof*.

"It was not my idea to become a director of horror films," Jess said. "If you look at my career before *Orlof*, there's no horror at all. I was a kind of intellectual director trying to follow the career of Antonioni." He laughs. "Not exactly that, but when *Orlof* became successful... OK, why not? I like horror films very much."

Naturally, when the producers struck gold, they wanted more from the same source. "They never spoke again about musicals or other things; they wanted horror films. That's why I made *The Sadistic Baron von Klaus* immediately after. And it

and as well from a business point of view as *Orlof*, or better even."

Even in these early years, young Jess was addicted to filmmaking, and was not about to sit around waiting for projects to materialize. Throughout the late '60s he directed two or three movies a year, many of them horror; he teamed with Lee on a pair of Fu Manchu films, *Count Dracula* and *The Bloody Judge*. As an anecdotal

"It's more interesting if the line of the story is not simple. Not A, B, C, D, but A, B, Z, H, you know?"

aside, when we shot Lee and Franco's interviews about *Judge* in London, I wanted them to be together, but Lee insisted on speaking separately. I respected his wishes, but wondered if there was animosity between them; then, when the two encountered one another in a corridor between interview shoots, Lee bent down to give Jess—about half his size—a warm hug, and the two broke into laugh-strewn Spanish banter.

Jess' next foray into vampire territory, *Vampyros Lesbos*, would be a seminal work, infused with such trademarks as a non-linear narrative, hypnotic score and plenty of erotic imagery. "Vampires are a fantastic element," he noted. "First, they should be hateful people, but at the same time, they're full of sex. It's very specific, so you don't mix them up with other horror-film monsters. And if a vampire is very bad and at the same time a beautiful woman, it's interesting. In horror, there has always been a kind of lesbian tendency. *Carmilla* for instance, by Sheridan Le Fanu. Even Bram Stoker had lesbian elements in his books. Roger Vadim made a very elegant lesbian-vampire film [1960's *Blood and Roses*], but I didn't like the result. So when I proposed *Vampyros Lesbos* to producer Artur Brauner, he



Fantastic Fest's Lars Nilsen might have wanted to be a bit more careful after presenting the filmmaker with that ceremonial sword.



The Severin Films team (John Cregan, Carl Daft and David Gregory) pose with the man they helped popularize.

immediately said yes."

Vampyros Lesbos starred one of Franco's more iconic discoveries, the stunning Soledad Miranda. She had the supporting role of Lucy in *Count Dracula*, but her on-screen presence made an impression on Franco and Brauner, who followed up with a series of pictures starring the young actress. "Before, she had done very stupid films," Jess recalled. "She wasn't happy about them. She wasn't a girl of culture, but had good intuition and knew it was much more important than all the films she had made before. She was pretty, but not in an idiotic way. She had fantastic eyes and a big personality. So we decided to make two or three or 10 films with her." Tragically, on the way back from signing the contract, the actress was killed in a car accident near Lisbon on August 18, 1970 at age 27. Jess always maintained that contrary to popular belief, he and Miranda were not lovers,



This photo displayed in the director's home commemorated his longtime love for Lina Romay, his favorite actress.

but more like father/daughter.

The true love of his life would take her first starring role three years later in *The Female Vampire*. Romay and Jess would subsequently make dozens of films together, often with Romay in a leading role, but even on films in which she didn't star, she would frequently serve as production manager and sometimes editor. Unlike her life partner (the two didn't actually marry until 2008), Romay was a nervous interviewee—which was surprising, as she ranks with the most uninhibited actresses in genre cinema—so our on-camera chats were limited. But off camera, she was extremely lively and fun to be with, and an avid movie lover.

"If a vampire is very bad and at the same time a beautiful woman, it's interesting."

She and Jess were often very outspoken about the imposition of others' moral standards on their films; to this day, Franco's *oeuvre* runs afoul of censors in some territories. Given his run-ins with the strict rules of Generalissimo Francisco

Franco's regime during his early filmmaking days, it's no surprise that young Jess chose not to stay loyal to his native land. "I didn't want to shoot in Spain, because my reputation among the authorities was very bad. I never was a communist, but in that period, when you weren't a good friend of the regime, you were a communist or an anarchist."

Rather than compromise his work, Jess took off, making films his way with no concessions to moral guardians. Legend has it that the Vatican itself declared him

and Luis Buñuel to be the world's most dangerous filmmakers. Growing up in a Catholic country, did he have any sense of guilt, I wondered? "In Spain, people weren't really religious; you had to do it because of the authorities," he countered. "I wasn't a believer. During that period, I thought there was probably something more important than us, but I had no time to care much about sin and things like that."

A multitude of movies back up this claim, not least sinful-sister flicks like *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun* and *The Demons*. "I made lots of films with nuns, of course, and still do. Nuns, for a Spanish director, are funny because when we were kids we had nuns all around, but I never took them seriously. Another element of the Franco period. I had fun putting nuns in erotic situations."

A lot of his finer works contain a certain dream/nightmare logic. Was he influ-

enced by surrealism? "Don't forget, I started my career in the theater with the most surrealistic writers in Spain: Miguel Mihura, Tono, Edgar Neville. They were much more bizarre than me. So being in this atmosphere was very normal." Non-linear storytelling, he says, "I liked from the beginning, because it's more interesting if the line of the story is not simple. Not A, B, C, D, but A, B, Z, H, you know? It's more difficult to understand, but I'm a pupil of Jean-Luc Godard, and he would say that if the story is confusing to people, that's good, because they will spend time trying to understand it."

"I don't think you get anything when everything is clear; it's much better if things happen like they do in life. In life, nothing is clear. Why did he kill his wife? You have to make a very deep study of his mentality, because you don't really understand why people do these sorts of things, yet they happen every day all over the world. The first time I wanted to show this drama of real life was in *Succubus*, where nothing is clear in the mind of this woman. But also around her, nothing is understandable."

Jess reached his notoriously prolific stride in the early '70s, and I would wonder how he could make, even on low budgets, so many unmistakably personal films. I assumed that because he always delivered exploitable elements, like ample female skin, in spades, producers didn't mind him turning out such peculiar works. Did he have a favorite backer over the years? "The only really good producers I had were, number one, Artur Brauner, a very rich man with the ability to make the films he wanted. Then Erwin Dietrich. Then Harry Alan Towers. That's it."

With Brauner, Jess also made the Miranda-starrer *She Killed in Ecstasy*, among others, and with Dietrich a whole slew including *Jack the Ripper*, *Wanda the Wicked Warden* and *Barbed Wire Dolls*. It was with the infamous Towers that he enjoyed the most international exposure, with films such as the Fu Manchu duo,



Franco appreciated good food and wine as much as a good movie.

Justine, *Dracula* and *99 Women* (see page 84). "When we started working together, it was fantastic for me. The only problem was, Harry had no money. Poor thing. I lent him some to finish *Count Dracula*, because he paid me in advance. But I liked him very much. I spoke about Harry with Roger Corman, and Corman liked him. It was when I made *Venus in Furs*. Corman said, 'If we had 10 producers like Harry, our house would be safe.' And I understand why, because Harry, with all the problems he had, was a very clever man and a good scriptwriter, and my personal relationship with him was always strong. Everything happened in a very nice way, except the money. At this point, he has owed me \$12,000 for 30 years. And I know I'll never get it. I don't care...well, I do care, but I know that sometimes life is like that."

But how did the Spanish *enfant terrible* get attached to international productions like the *Fu Manchus* in the first place? "I made my first film with them because John Hough wasn't free. He had a contract to make a documentary for the BBC, so *Fu Manchu* was already prepared, but they had no director. They asked Corman, the artistic supervisor, 'Who can handle this film?' And he said, 'We did this film called *Succubus* with Jess Franco...' And that was it. It was a beautiful period. It didn't make me rich, but I worked with great people. For example, Stuart Freeborn did special effects on three or four of the films. If I'd never worked with Harry, I wouldn't have been able to work with people of this class." Franco claims that when he ran into *Star Wars* FX genius Freeborn in the '80s, he was noticeably nervous. When Jess enquired why, Freeborn allegedly said he'd based the design of Yoda on him!

Talking of legends, it is an oft-told tale in cultdom that one way Jess could be so superhumanly productive was that he would shoot more than one film at a time, sometimes with the same blissfully oblivious cast and crew. Jess categorically denied this—so then how could he churn out five to seven films a year? "My personal problem is that when I'm shooting a film, I'm not able to think about another. It's

impossible to cut my brain into separate pieces: 'This one's for *Dracula* and this one's for the cannibal film.' When it was organized well, I was able to shoot very close, one day between movies.

"But they had to be prepared by professionals who knew what I wanted. For instance, I made the first *Fu Manchu* together with *99 Women*, but I wasn't able to shoot *Women* in the morning and *Fu*

When it came to horror, Jess had an opinion on everything; for example, he thought zombies and cannibals were stupid.

Manchu in the afternoon. I finished one film, then started the other, because I had people who were fantastic in their preparation. But this nonsense about me making two at the same time? No, I would shoot back to back. I like this system. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to shoot, let's say, *Count Dracula*, and the next day, because we'd agreed about the actors, the locations and everything, *Bloody Judge*."

Franco would continue making films at a steady pace right up until his autumn years, with only his physical health slowing him down. Mobility had become increasingly difficult, but it didn't stop him from shooting his bizarre latter-day video features. "Cinema is the most beautiful thing to come into my life. The other is Lina. They are the only reasons I'm happy. I was never conscious of being rich, I just wanted enough to keep doing my favorite things."

He would laugh it off, but I know Jess got a kick out of his recent fame and, dare I say it, respectability. I worked with Fantastic Fest to bring Jess and Lina out to Austin, TX for an honorary award, and while he was tickled by the recognition, he and Lina were more delighted to experience a slice of Texas, hanging out among young film fanatics at the festival, sampling the local foods, listening to music and talking with anyone who fancied a



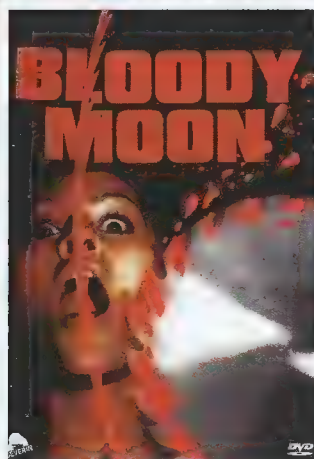
Photos: Courtesy David Gregory

Writer/DVD producer Gregory accompanied Franco and Romay to Austin, TX's Fantastic Fest for one of his Lifetime Achievement honors.

chat. But what of the Lifetime Achievement Goya—the Spanish Oscar!—he got all dressed up for in 2009?

"I didn't expect a Goya. They called me on the phone: 'I'm from the Academy of Cinema, will you accept the Goya Lifetime Achievement?' 'Of course I accept. I'm happy, it's wonderful, thank you very much.' That's all and nothing more. I know what I do and what I did. I was never proud of myself because I know more than anybody about my limitations, and I don't believe in honors, which are so false.

"I would be proud if I were John Ford or Carol Reed. To be proud about Jess Franco? No. Jess Franco is a director who loves cinema and preferred to do it more than any other thing in the world, including to f**k. This will die with me. I put all my life, forces and brain into doing my best. Sometimes I was closer to being successful, sometimes less, sometimes not at all. I still love the same things. So the day I die, my feelings will stop...probably. Maybe not; maybe I'll go on, like Soledad Miranda's husband in *She Killed in Ecstasy*."



Jess Franco The Undying Legend

How the video explosion led the Spanish horror specialist to make his belated breakout.

By TIM LUCAS

Think back, if you can, to the state of home video in the 1980s. It was the dawn of the era, when major-studio releases like *Ben-Hur* and *Singin' in the Rain* began to trickle out in those pasty, pastel-colored, badly cropped transfers familiar from TV. You couldn't really trust anything; even *The Wizard of Oz* somehow got released with a line of dialogue missing. Within a few years, as more and smaller companies got in on the act, we got our first hints of what was possible in this new medium, as movies never before shown on TV began appearing on Beta and VHS: *Blood Feast*, *Two Thousand Maniacs!*, *The Corpse Grinders*, *The Ghastly Ones*, etc.

As smaller and shadier distributors emerged, their product followed suit, until classic Universal and Hammer horror became greatly outnumbered on rental-store shelves by titles we'd never heard of, credits we couldn't trust and packaging that boggled the mind. Amvest's *Immediate Disaster* turned out to be *Stranger from Venus*, Electric Video's *Club Dead* was *The Folks at Red Wolf Inn* and Regal Video's *Revenge of Dr. X* was later

behind a convenience store, about a mile from my front door. Walking in there for the first time was a life-changing experience; it seemed to be where all the big-box titles from the likes of Lightning Video, Video Gems and Wizard Video had gone to die, and it was under those imprints that I first frowned upon such unfamiliar titles as *Erotikill*, *Demoniac* and *Zombie Lake*. All I could confirm from their fine print was that they were foreign, but that was enough for me! I immediately signed up for a membership, rolled up my sleeves and dug in. That's how, back in 1988, I began to take a closer look at the horror and exploitation films of Spanish director Jesús "Jess" Franco.

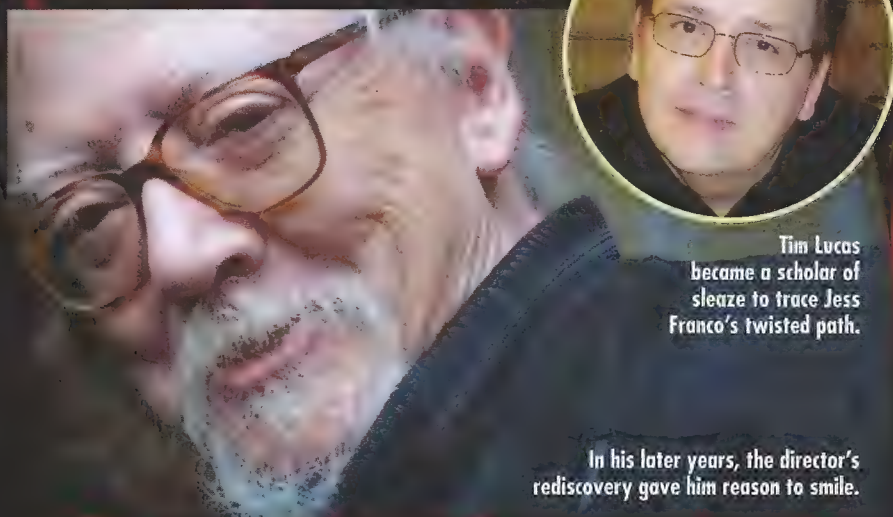
I knew Franco as one of the "unwatchables," more by reputation than from firsthand exposure. *Castle of Frankenstein* had always yawned over his movies, and I had seen a few disappointing titles: *Dr. Orloff's Monster* on TV when I was a kid, *Virgin Report* at the drive-in when I was a teenager and *Count Dracula*

mographies, and even the few that existed in French and Spanish fanzines at that time were, by today's standards, woefully incomplete. It was daunting work, but I was encouraged to continue by a few factors.

First of all, Franco's U.S. releases were a minefield of censored, alternative and even pseudonymous versions; I rarely knew such excitement as when I first discovered that Lightning's *Erotikill*, directed by "James P. Johnson," was the same movie as Private Screenings' *The Loves of Irina*, albeit a more erotic variant in which Lina Romay's titular vamp sucked...well, something else. Secondly, I was obsessed by all the eureka's packed into Phil Hardy's then-newly imported book *The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies*, which offered particularly tantalizing descriptions of Franco flicks I had yet to see, and also helped make sense of my discoveries, identifying *Erotikill* as *La Comtesse Noir* ("The Dark Countess") and *The Loves of Irina* as the more erotic *La Comtesse aux Seins Nus* ("The Bare Breasted Countess"), and further informing me that yet another, hardcore variant existed called *Les Avaleuses* ("The Suckers"). That one, it turns out, exists only in French and German. The more I learned, the more there was to know.

The first product of these early investigations became a three-part article for FANGORIA, beginning with "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Jess Franco" in #78. Looking back, I must admit to making some mistakes in both fact and opinion, but these articles—an overview of titles then available on domestic cassette—broke the topsoil for an excavation that continues for me to this day, and perhaps for you too.

Since then, most of a quarter century has passed, but what extraordinary consequences have resulted since those initial articles heralded his rediscovery in America and worldwide! Today, Franco is the filmmaker best represented on DVD, with more than 140 releases to his credit, which furthermore collect in excess of 14 hours of original interviews and behind-the-scenes documentation—and his work has begun its transition to Blu-ray. Several books about Franco have appeared in multiple languages, including his own first autobiography, *Memorias del Tío Jess* ("Memoirs of Uncle Jess"), with a major English-language study by *Nightmare USA* author Stephen Thrower promised before the end of this year. In 2008, the prestigious Cinémathèque Française in Paris hosted an exhaustive, five-week retrospective of Franco films in 35mm, and on February 1, 2009, he was presented with the Goya Award for Lifetime Achievement, the highest honor bestowed by the Spanish Academy of Art and Cinematographic Sciences. Thirty years before, when Generalissimo Francisco Franco was still running the country, the director had been obliged to leave Spain for France, or risk imprisonment for making the kind



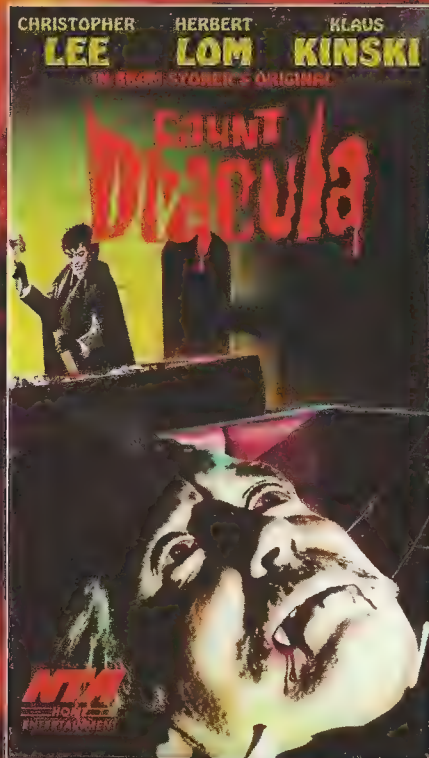
Tim Lucas became a scholar of sleaze to trace Jess Franco's twisted path.

In his later years, the director's rediscovery gave him reason to smile.

discovered to be an unreleased Japanese movie scripted by Edward D. Wood, Jr., of all people.

A short time after moving into the Cincinnati house where I still live today, I discovered Video Village, a mom-and-pop shop tucked into a small L-shaped room

on videotape. I find them all more interesting now, but at the time, I had no syllabus. In those days, there was no Internet Movie Database, no Eurocult message boards, no guardrails to warn me of how deep an abyss I was peering into. I didn't know of any published Franco fil-



of movies he was driven to create.

The timing of my first Franco articles was fortuitous. I didn't realize this at the time, but my initial research coincided with Franco's return to the front ranks of his profession, when French producer/video entrepreneur Rene Chateau hired him to direct *Faceless* (a.k.a. *Les Predateurs de la Nuit*), the first feature he had made with an international cast and full-sized crew in almost 20 years. Unfortunately, Franco did not follow it up with the kinds of films his newfound audience would have embraced, and when *Faceless* finally saw its first North American release in 1990, via the Toronto-based Malofilm, it lost three minutes of its most gruesome highlights to Canadian censorship. It wasn't available for uncut viewing in the States until Media Blasters/Shriek Show's DVD in



February 2004.

By this time, a whole generation of new fans had come forward, some—like Synapse Films' Don May, Jr., Mondo Macabro's Pete Tombs and Severin Films' David Gregory—helping issue his immense back catalog on disc, and others finding ways to further his cause by facilitating new production. The most notable of these was Kevin Collins, a New Yorker who took it upon himself to travel to Madrid to interview Franco for a special

There's no question that you'll get more out of Franco's films the better acquainted you become with his overall output.

edition of Craig Ledbetter's fanzine *European Trash Cinema*, and his muse Romay (real name: Rosa Maria Almirall Martinez) for a special One Shot Productions booklet.

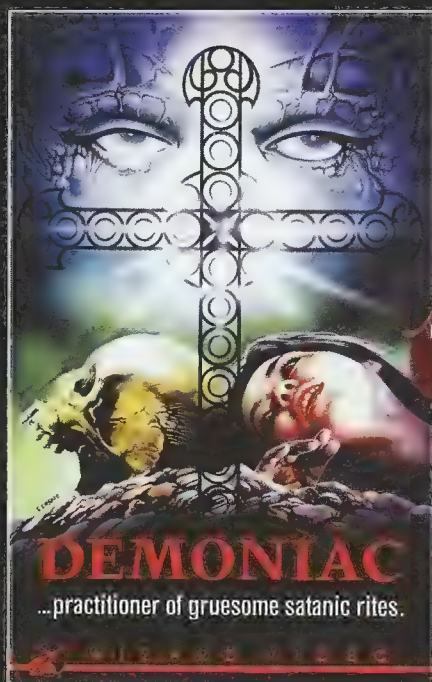
Collins later confided to me that, when he asked Romay to sign some of his memorabilia, she said that no one had ever asked for her autograph before. This is a woman who, at that time, had appeared in something like 100 films—and starred in most of them—yet no one had ever asked for her signature! This would soon change, as Franco and Romay began appearing at conventions and festivals around the world. Collins seized the opportunity and—with the help of other fan investors—began to produce and market a number of direct-to-video Franco movies, beginning with 1997's *Tender Flesh*.

Franco's DTV work was not only fan-produced but seemingly fan-specific, intended for a select and appreciative few rather than the average consumer—but, really, hasn't it almost always been this way? If Franco's work has any particular magic formula that incites obsession, it is his serial use of not only actors and locations, but characters and situations. The IMDb presently lists 194 movies under his direction—though it's an incomplete list, especially if one considers alternative versions as separate titles—yet it's possible that this sprawling achievement could be reduced to no more than a dozen or so recurring stories. Franco's last film, 2010's *Paula-Paula*, was shot entirely in the director's own apartment in Malaga, with its DVD supplement interview recorded less than a half-hour after its completion! Ostensibly inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it actually shares character and story continuity with Franco's 1984 Al Pereira mystery *Camino Solitario*, the poster for which is shown hanging on his living-room wall as both a clue and a wink.

Franco's work was halted in 2011 by Romay's declining health; she tragically succumbed to cancer on February 15,



2012 at age 57. She was not only Franco's most enduring onscreen discovery, but his most valuable production ally, doubling as everything from production manager to assistant director, editor and postproduction supervisor. An avowed exhibitionist who made her first appearances in Franco movies in 1972, Romay was eclipsed to some extent during her lifetime by the growing legend of his earlier star discovery, Soledad Miranda, who was killed in a traffic accident in 1970, but Romay was so essential to Franco's taboo-bursting cinema that nearly 40 years of his achievements are unimaginable without her. The director was never more inspired or productive as he was between 1973-74, when they became a couple and made close to 20 films together. They didn't actually marry until 2008, but they lived



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and worked almost exclusively together until her death.

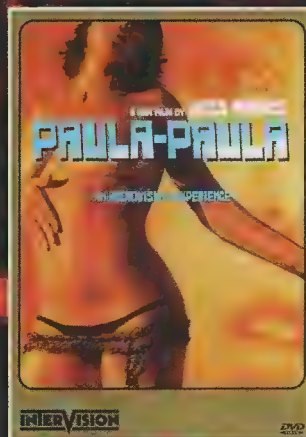
When she died, Franco's fan base feared it would mean the end of his career as well, because she—some 24 years his junior—kept him active. It is a testament to Franco's cinema that so many of his and Romay's fans took the news of her death so personally, almost as if a member of their own family had passed away. It may sound like a joke, considering all the bawdy things she did in front of Franco's probing zoom lens, but I

truly believe that no other actress gave quite as much of herself to cinema as did Romay.

So what has my study of Franco's filmography taught me? To begin with, as I wrote in my article "How to Read a Franco Film" (which appeared in the very first issue of my magazine *Video Watchdog*), you can't see one Franco film until you've seen them all. (It pleases me enormously that Franco himself quoted this line during a Spanish television interview, in order to concur with it.) My point is that every Franco movie sheds light on the rest, because he filmed so rapidly that his work becomes a continuum, a house of mirrors, rather than a series of individual, self-contained statements. This doesn't mean that each movie can't be enjoyed on its own merits, but there's no question that you'll get more out of them the better acquainted you become with his overall output. This is far truer of Franco than it is of John Ford, Howard Hawks or even Franco's own master Orson Welles, which I believe makes him one of the cinema's truest auteurs.

Franco's DTV work was not only fan-produced but seemingly fan-specific, intended for a select and appreciative few.

Secondly, Franco's films have taught me that when all movies begin to look alike, cinema has become unhealthy. One of the reasons why people sometimes find it difficult to embrace Franco's work right away is that it's out of step with how they do things in Hollywood, or even other European genre films. Franco may employ commercial formats like horror and sexploitation, but he uses them to create pictures that are literary, campy, ironic, satirical, primitive, anarchistic, political, even diaristic. His legacy somehow embodies the traditions of the genre (*Count Dracula*), the reinvention of those traditions (*Vampyros Lesbos*), the shattering of its taboos (*Female Vampire*) and its fandom (*Dracula vs. Frankenstein*, a.k.a. *The Screaming Dead*). He also produced, photographed, edited, scored and dubbed much of his own work, while occasionally acting in it. The French film critic Jean-Pierre Bouyxou, who played a blind Dr. Orloff in *Female Vampire*, remembers seeing Franco act in a scene while simultaneously pulling the camera focus with his offscreen hand, with only instinct to guide him!



Simply put, Jess Franco is the most fertile, fecund ~~artist~~ the horror genre has ever known, and its greatest maverick—a distinction all the more remarkable for having been achieved in the era of 35mm—and the opportunity to explore his work has been one of the most rewarding adventures of my own reviewing career.

To learn more about Lucas' writings, visit www.videowatchdog.com



FRANCO-RAMA!

When news of Jess Franco's death broke, fringe-cinema fans world-wide planned tributes to the master of erotic horror. Among them was *Dear God No!* director and exploitation historian James

ring Franco's first muse, the smolderingly gorgeous Soledad Miranda.

Perhaps *Eugenie* set the bar too high, as *Sinner* (1973), a flick surprisingly few there had seen, couldn't measure up and failed to

plainable and absurd.

The next thing anyone knew, *Bloody Bloody Bible Camp* had somehow leaked into the playlist. Sometime during that movie, a pack of dogs—yes, actual wild dogs—tried to steal a pork shoulder from the grill. The meat was successfully defended, but it was obviously a sign that we had angered the cinema gods. How to *Seduce a Virgin* (1974) brought things back to the honors, playing almost like a satisfying greatest-hits package of tried-and-true Franco

tropes. Then it was on to hardcore horror with *Jack the Ripper* (1976), one of his goriest pictures and also the night's first onscreen appearance by the luscious Lina Romay.

After taking in Franco's softcore and horror sides, and having been exposed to more Klaus Kinski than is probably healthy, we knew that there was only one facet of Franco's career left to explore. In the wee hours of the morning, we went headlong into XXX territory with *Entre Pitos Anda el Juego* (1986). The things Romay does in that flick cannot be described in a respectable magazine such as this.

Juliette (1970) was the last film of the night, and in a fitting callback to the way

Madeline Brumby of the exploitation homage *Dear God No!* helped pay tribute to a B-goddess past.

Bickert. On April 5, his amazing backyard drive-in played host to the Dusk 'Til Dawn Memorial Franco-thon. Drinks flowed freely, mysterious smoked meats were savored *Perverse Countess*-style and the Atlanta horror scene praised Jesús under the stars all night long. It's doubtful that any party could more perfectly capture the twisted beauty, sleazy atmosphere and propensity to veer into "What the hell just happened?" territory at a moment's notice that exemplified the style of the Euro-trash auteur.

The marathon kicked off with one of his glossier films, *Venus in Furs* (1969). The assembled Francophiles proclaimed their appreciation for the bizarre visuals and dream logic while foiling miserably to explain the barely existent plot to the uninitiated. The heavy doses of sex and jazz were enough to please both camps eliciting repeated chants of "Horns and boobs!" Following *Venus* was the incredibly sexy *Eugenie de Sade* (1974), star-

impress. Despite also being known as *Diary of a Nymphomaniac*, it lacked sufficiently in both gore and nudity that mob rule led to the film being axed. At that point, the evening took a cue from Franco and careened into the unex-

pected. Many of us first discovered Franco's oeuvre, we watched a bootleg VHS with no subtitles. As impending daybreak threatened to end the party, the grand finale was prepared: It was time to send the inflatable effigy of Lina Romay (think *Private Parts*—Paul Bartel, not Howard Stern) that had been our guest of honor all evening to meet Franco in the heavens. While it is true that she died in 2012, this was not a crowd that would let technicalities stand in the way of a grand dramatic gesture. The fact that a blow-up doll filled with helium will not float didn't stop the proceedings, either. Anything will fly if you attach enough balloons to it, and fly she did. As a final toast was raised to the director and his leading lady disappeared into the clouds, everyone in attendance felt exactly how one should feel after a Franco marathon: a little confused, thoroughly debauched, strangely edified and undeniably entertained.

—Nathan Hamilton



Photos: James Bickert

The drive-in will never die, even on a small scale.

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JACK'S JOURNEY

Into Perversion

Legendary Eurohorror presence Jack Taylor spent plenty of time in Franco-land.

By KIER-LA JANISSE

In the films of Jess Franco, let's face it: The men rarely stand out. One shining exception is the amazing Jack Taylor, who, like Howard Vernon, was an actor Franco returned to again and again throughout his peak period.

The American-born Taylor (born George Brown Randall) settled in Spain after being brought there for a bit part in *Cleopatra* (1963); already fluent in Spanish from an earlier stint in Mexico under the name Grek Martin, he quickly found a home in the booming Spanish film industry and remains there to this day. While Taylor's pedigree includes movies by directors as varied as Amando de Ossorio (*Night of the Sorcerers*, 1973), Juan Piquer Simon (*Pieces*, 1983), Roman Polanski (*The Ninth Gate*, 1999) and Eugenio Mira (*The Birthday*, 2004), he first came to Eurocult notoriety through Franco's lens.

Franco recognized Taylor's versatility, positing him as both suave leading man and sleazy villain; his piercing, deep-set blue eyes and skeletal bone structure were used to great effect as the latter, most notably in *Eugenie... the Story of Her Journey Into Perversion* (1970) and *The Vengeance of Dr. Mabuse* (1972), which transforms Taylor's face into a vision of pop-art cool. He's at his most dashing alongside Janine Reynaud in *Succubus* (1967), delivered the first-ever onscreen appearance of Quincey Morris in *Count Dracula* (1970) and in *Female Vampire* (1973), he mistakenly thinks he can save the titular bloodsucker (Lina Romay) with true love, and pays for it with two holes in a bad place.

Somewhat fittingly, it was Taylor who gave me the news of Franco's passing on April 2, as we were already planning this interview. I'm extremely grateful to Taylor that he found time to share these reflections on his work with Franco on that fragile day.

FANGORIA: Leading up to and running through the sexual revolution, there was a stream of intellectualism in lascivious



writing and cinema, a confluence of art and erotica—from Henry Miller to *Evergreen* magazine, filmmakers like Alain Robbe-Grillet and Fernando Arrabal—but despite Franco's background, he seemed to avoid intellectualizing the erotic. How would you describe his obsessions

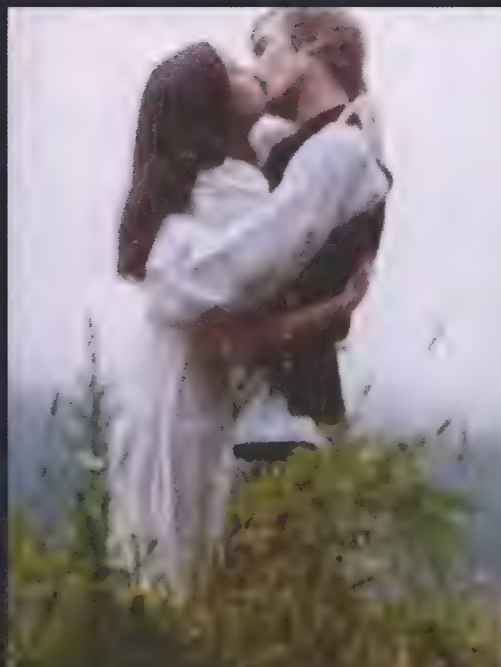
and the purpose they served for him? **JACK TAYLOR:** Jess was a member of an interesting family. His brother Enrique was a famous music critic, and his nephews Ricardo Franco and Javier Marias were a director and well-known writer. However, I wouldn't call Jess an intellectual. A professor explained to me long ago that there are doers and thinkers; Jess was more of a doer. A rebel he was, and perhaps a bit of a voyeur.

He came from a normal but probably conservative family who weren't quite sure what to do with him, and from what his first wife Nicole told me, he was sent to a very strict school at El Escorial run by Dominican monks, which undoubtedly only made things worse. Whether this was true or simply an excuse for being anarchistic, I can't be sure. He did enjoy using any scheme possible to attain his desired results. He was a charming and brilliant con-

Love means keeping your mouth away from the other's neck in *Female Vampire*.

versationalist, with great taste in music, a snake charmer of sorts, a gourmet and, when he wanted to be, a very good director. His only problem was that after the first week, he became bored with what he was shooting and needed a change. I say all this with the greatest respect.

We have to consider that he lived the earlier part of his life under General Francisco Franco's regime, except for periods in France, where he was able to see another world out there, away from the hypocrisy of the time in Spain. His first films contained little or no eroticism; I believe the first example of this was in *Succubus*. Violence was permitted on screen, especially if the right side won, but sex was out of the question. I did eight films with Jess over a 10-year period, and his interest in the erotic eventually became more important than the storylines. I'm sure he read Miller, saw Robbe-Grillet, perhaps was amused by Arrabal's boldness, but Jess was more interested in the shock value of images. Of those eight, I prefer perhaps three or four—the last two were purely for eco-



Both creating sets and acting among them, as Jack Taylor did in *Count Dracula*, can wear a guy out.

conomic reasons. We must remember that hypocrisy also reigned in Hollywood, where married couples had to have separate beds! There is no doubt that even his early films were considered "cheap" or "shocking" by certain groups, but this also happened with Pedro Almodóvar later on. FANG: You experienced filmmaking in Spain during and after General Franco's rule; how did things change?

TAYLOR: After Franco's death, eroticism finally made it to Spain, and all the actors wanted to do nude scenes—even those past the age to do so. Before, directors were sending out veiled messages against the system for anyone who cared to consider them protests—but unfortunately, afterward, with nothing to criticize, the films were often less interesting. Social critics abounded, but in a more direct manner, since Luis García Berlanga had done a good job of this before.

FANG: There is a simplified perception in the horror community that the Spanish genre boom happened *after* General Franco's death, but in fact many of the most seminal films were made while he was still alive. How did the political context affect genre cinema of the time?

TAYLOR: Those films were popular during Franco's time because it was a way to avoid the censors. It was generally accepted that there was something sexy about watching a monster chase a miniskirted girl through a cemetery, or two or three well-formed ladies chatting in their bikinis. Those of Jess' seen in the country—and most were not—were considered B-movies, along with the others. I doubt if the establishment was aware of Jess' films. He became of public interest, and then only among "cinófilos," a generation later or more, finally becoming a cult figure.

FANG: What do you remember about Soledad Miranda, and Franco's relationship with her?

TAYLOR: I worked only once with Soledad, and admired her. Her death came too soon. Who knows what she could have done? In *Vampir Cuadecuc*, a film by Pere Portabella shot during the making of



Whatever Janine Reynaud's condition, there were a lot of pulses racing among *Succubus*' audience.

Count Dracula, there's a scene where I help Soledad into a coffin, and I recall feeling exceptionally emotional and caring at the time.

FANG: Patty Shepard is my favorite actress from the Spanish cult films. What do you recall about her, and why wasn't she in any of Franco's movies?

TAYLOR: Patty is another of my favorites; I worked with her in [Javier Aguirre's] *El Asesino Está Entre los Trece*. We had a great time. She retired too early, and should have continued. Both she and Soledad had the look that is important in films: eyes that transmit something. You can be a great actor, but if you don't have that quality, something is missing from your performance. Patty never worked with Franco, and I don't know if it was by choice; I doubt that she would have been comfortable with him.

FANG: In what ways do you feel Franco was exploring issues of power and dominance in his films? Did you see them as subversive at the time?

TAYLOR: I think Jess was simply express-

ing his disregard for everything—morals, censorship, whatever. There was nothing intellectual in what he was doing; others read that into his work. He lived and survived by making films. He wouldn't admit this, I'm sure, but I say it with the greatest respect.

FANG: How much did your English dub tracks reflect the actual scripts? Do you remember your dialogue in *Nightmares*

"I think Jess was simply expressing his disregard for everything...morals, censorship, whatever."

Come at Night or *Tender and Perverse Emanuelle*, for instance? You have hilarious lines in those films.

TAYLOR: The tracks I've heard are true to what I said. We didn't have scripts, with the exception of *Dracula* and *Eugenie*, which were written by Harry Alan Towers. *Necronomicon* began with three and a half pages of notes. Jess would dictate an outline, and I would put it into words. We made a great team at times, I must say. As for *Nightmares* or *Emanuelle*, I can't say because I don't recognize the titles! His movies kept changing names and content. I don't know how many versions there are of some, and only one or two ended up as porn.

FANG: Were you social with Franco at all? Did you feel you were in a family of misfits at the time?

TAYLOR: Not in the least. We were simply actors doing a job; nothing like [Andy Warhol's] Factory existed. We might spend a Sunday afternoon in Jess' hotel room; I remember one with Maria Rohm and Christopher Lee. Another, someone's birthday. There was no special social



In *Succubus*, Taylor helped Jess Franco usher in a new, hotter side to his screen work.



As Spanish genre cinema has changed over the decades, it hasn't run out of roles for Taylor, as in 2004's *The Birthday*.

scene; some of us would have dinner together, but it was mostly work, eat, sleep. I remember a few special dinners: One with his first wife and Maria Schell in the Basque country, another in Zurich, just him and me, and the last with him in a wheelchair with Lina Romay, here in Madrid.

"I did eight films with Jess, and his interest in the erotic eventually became more important than the storylines."

FANG: In one of your interviews, you said you were the art director on *Count Dracula*; what did that entail? At one point, your character and Jonathan Harker (Fred Williams) throw giant boulders down onto Dracula's coffin, and one of them actually hits a horse in the head. What were these boulders made out of?

TAYLOR: Yes, I did the art direction on *Dracula*. It involved choosing the clothes, designing the sets, etc. A double job and hard work, but I enjoyed it. Those boulders were made of plastic.

FANG: In this same interview—from the mid-'90s—you say that other than *Dracula* and *Succubus*, you had never watched any of the films you made with Jess. Why was that, and has it changed since?

TAYLOR: Most of Jess' films were not shown in Spain. *Succubus*, shot in 1967, I didn't see until 1992, when it was shown



In the likes of *Succubus*, Taylor stood out for being well-dressed as many around him doffed their clothes.

at the Filmoteca. I was even denounced from several pulpits, along with the picture, as immoral, etc. I remember on a trip to Miami, a friend took me to a video store and there they all were—but unavailable then in Spain. I was in LA by chance when *Eugenie* opened. *Dracula* premiered here [in Spain], however. So my lack of viewing was mostly due to not being in the right place.

FANG: Tell us about your new films. I've heard that one of them, *Wax*, features the voice of Paul Naschy—how did this hap-

pen? Was it something recorded before he died, or using old audio?

TAYLOR: In *Wax*, I play Dr. Knox, who has a very different view of science, investigations into human pain and strange eating habits, among other kinky customs. In the script, there was a figure of him in the wax museum. Since there was already a bust of Paul there, director Victor Matellano and the co-writer of the script, Hugo Stiven Casanovas, wanted to include Paul's presence, so Victor used a recording of a scene from a 17th-century sacramental play, *The Dance of Death*, that he had directed with Paul a few years back. There is also a moment of tribute when

Geraldine Chaplin, who plays a TV producer, leaves the museum and stops for a second to contemplate the figure of her famous father. I really enjoyed doing that; it was purely and simply fun.

Eugenio Mira also included me in *Grand Piano*, in giant photographs as the inventor of said piano; he had promised to include me in all his films, but in this one there was no role, so...pictures. Very impressive they are, too. Do I need to say that he's my favorite director? I recently did a TV series called *La Fuga* where I was Prisoner #1. It was great, because it gave me the chance to take on a completely different look. I was tired of being the well-dressed baddie or foreigner. Grubby, hair down to my shoulders and all!

FANG: Last question, not related to the films: Is there a song that can make you cry, and conversely, is there one that can make you feel invincible?

TAYLOR: "Nessun Dorma" and "Sempre Libera"—the latter sung by Maria Callas—are upbeat and put me in an invincible mood. Anything by Billie Holiday or Janis Joplin reaches me, and "Vincent (Starry Starry Night)" by Don McLean makes me—even though it sounds corny—a bit misty.

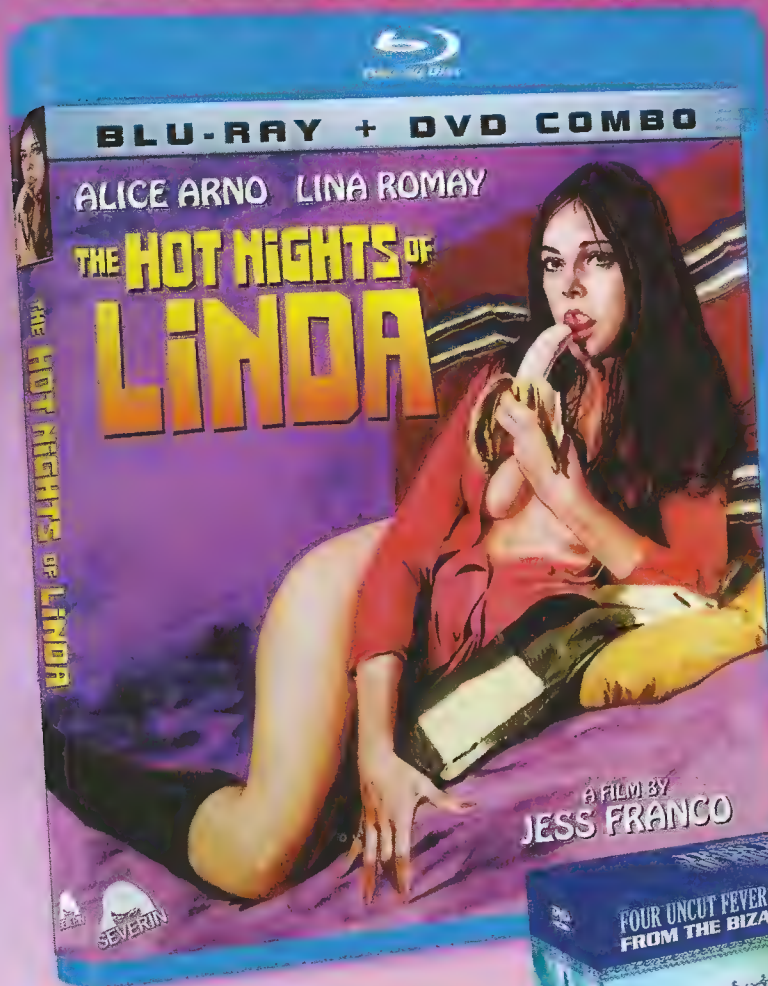


Among the unique elements of *Female Vampire* is that Baron Von Rothany (Taylor) can search for her in the daytime.



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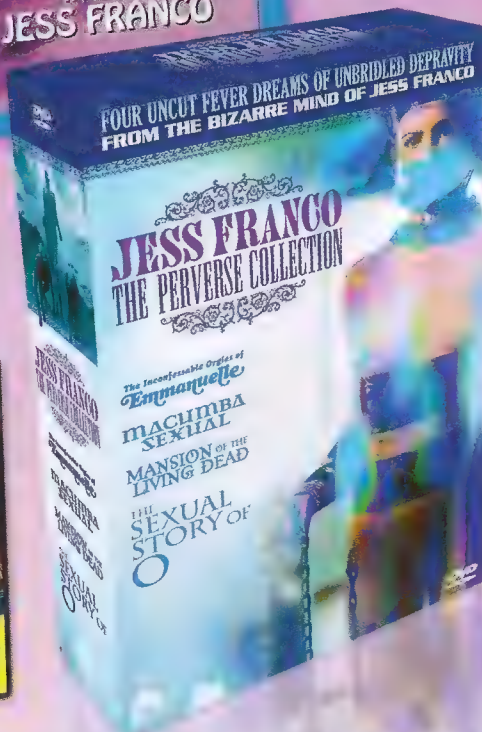
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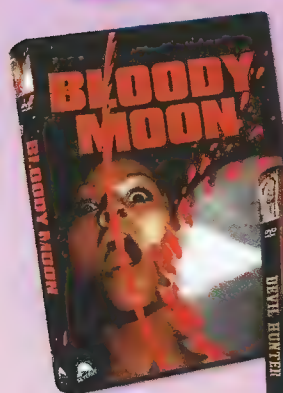
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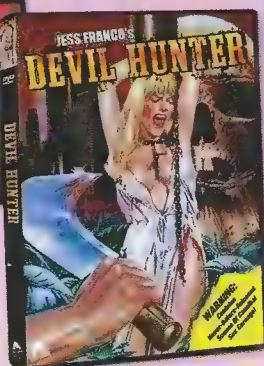
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Beautiful Maria

Actress Maria Rohm made her presence known in many of Jess Franco's finest films.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

Austrian-born (as Helga Grohmann) actress and, eventually, producer Maria Rohm was something of a child prodigy. Discovered at the tender age of 4 by Germany's Wiener Burgtheater, she literally grew up performing, winning acclaim from her fellow thespians and paving the way for a respectable career.

And then she met Harry Alan Towers.

Those familiar with 1960s genre cinema know Towers' name; the larger-than-life, prolific, impassioned British producer and occasional actor guided a series of decently budgeted and colorful spy, adventure and horror films well into the '70s and beyond, including some of the best—and most accessible—work of Jess Franco. Together, Towers and Franco made such wild, sexy fare as *The Girl from Rio*, *99 Women*, *Venus in Furs*, several Christopher Lee Fu Manchu pictures as well as Lee's *The Bloody Judge* and the faithful, undervalued 1970 version of *Dracula*, featuring what Lee has long claimed to be his favorite turn as the Count.

Starring in these remarkable films, slowly evolving from lower-billed co-star to featured female lead, was the beautiful, uninhibited Rohm, with piercing eyes and feminine presence—a revered actress adding class and sensuality. She wed Towers in 1964, and their personal and professional love affair endured and thrived until Towers passed away in 2009. This year, Rohm ushered Towers' previously unpublished autobiography *Mr. Towers of London* to print via BearManor Media, but



rarely is she asked about her own remarkable career. FANGORIA was honored to have the opportunity to hear some of her stories of walking with giants—including the late, lamented Franco—on an international canvas.

FANGORIA: Do you recall your first meeting with Towers? Was it love at first sight?
MARIA ROHM: At 16 I started working again on stage, then did a couple of films, and at 18 I met Harry at an audition in the



coffee shop at the Hotel Sacher in Vienna, where he was casting *City of Fear*, and got the part. It wasn't love at first sight; more awe and admiration. We grew to love each other, and it didn't take very long. During the shoot in Salzburg, I got to know Harry and his mother a lot better. She was quite a lady; she was a major during WWI, and during WWII, Harry had to salute his mom, as she held a higher military rank. I don't know if that says it all, but Harry's mother was very strong-willed. As *The Sound of Music* was shooting in Salzburg at the same time, we had nice dinners

"It could be said that Jess [Franco] was at the mercy of his feelings; that's why his work could be so uneven."

with some of the cast. Harry had known Julie Andrews since she was a child.

FANG: It must have been a tremendously exciting world for you to enter...

ROHM: It certainly was. Despite our age difference, Harry and I fit together right from the start. We both grew up in the theater, we had read and even appeared in some of the same plays and shared similar views on many subjects. I have always been around adults much older than myself, and have never taken to people my own age or had a peer group of any kind. I feel more attuned to people who are much older—and, now that I am older, sometimes much younger than myself.

FANG: You worked with so many wonderful, fascinating, larger-than-life characters—can we talk about Klaus Kinski? There have been many diverse things written about Kinski, most of them unsavory...

ROHM: Klaus was one-of-a-kind, very talented. His escapades seemed to increase or decrease according to his popularity. In general, Harry and I got on well with him. We could see through his tantrums, and realized he'd had a difficult early life. Whatever his exact circumstances may have been during and at the end of the war, he came away feeling powerless,



Venus in Furs looks even better out of them.

which led him to want to exert power over the people around him. Insecurity is most often the root cause of bad behavior.

I have to admit I was upset when I first read Klaus' sexual fantasies about myself and Margaret Lee, which he described as factual, in what I believe was his first book. I wanted to sue Klaus, but Harry, Margaret and others convinced me that that would only attract more attention to the whole situation. Margaret and I were very good friends for many years, and I'm so sorry we've lost touch. Last I heard, Margaret was doing theater in California. FANG: How about Christopher Lee? Was he a difficult man, or a joy?

ROHM: Christopher could be fun and we did have some laughs, but I always felt aware of his mother's aristocratic and his father's military background. I would not call Chris very warm or emotionally accessible. He is a very cultured man whose first love is opera, for which his nature is ideally suited. Bigger than life, in per-



The straw-haired beauty had a roll in the hay with Hans Hass Jr. in *The Bloody Judge*.

son as well as when he is performing, Chris is always very impressive and a consummate professional. Extremely well-mannered, with a wonderful voice that was always great to listen to, especially during morning makeup. I will draw a veil as to Chris' accounts regarding *Eugenie*; it's an amusing story, and more in line with Chris' public self-image. I am very happy for his success in the Tim Burton films, *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, as well as the fact that he is now Sir Christopher Lee. Only a very few actors have had Chris' long-lasting, illustrious career. He seems to be working more than ever now.

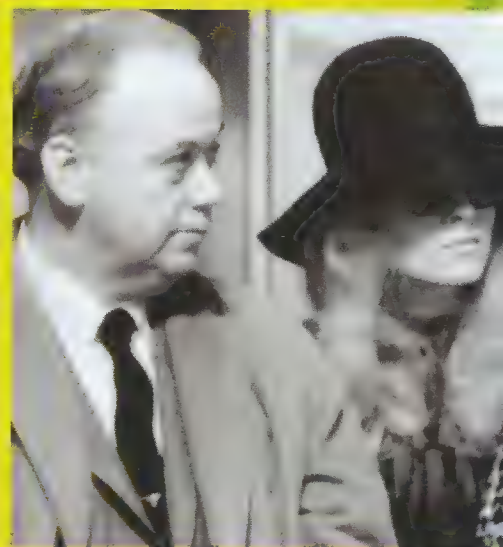
FANG: You were known during this period for being rather... uninhibited. Was nudity ever difficult for you? Do you regret any of your overtly sexual roles?

ROHM: I was an early baby boomer, and felt privileged and happy to be a part of

the sexual revolution, which was close to my heart. I felt very strongly that Victorian morality was rather immoral by trying to prohibit something as natural as free sexual expression and affection in all

"I see erotic expression as being closely linked to the creative process, and thereby enhancing personal meaning."

its forms. I believe more freedom creates more awareness, and more awareness creates more freedom. Society needs rules, but they have to be based on allowing people to make informed decisions. Rules should not be used as oppression; otherwise, they produce just another form



Harry Alan Towers and Maria Rohm were the power couple of 1960s and '70s genre cinema.

of slavery. I see erotic expression as being closely linked to the creative process, and thereby enhancing personal meaning.

FANG: This is something Jess Franco believed as well. Can you describe your first encounter with him?

ROHM: Jess was a unique human being. I first met him in Rio de Janeiro for *Blood of Fu Manchu*. I learned very quickly that Jess was a rather temperamental director. If everything didn't go his way, he had a tendency to sulk, which worked against him and his creativity. Jess' mood swings could be difficult to understand and exasperating to deal with, at least for me. He could also be a total joy to be around and work with, truly inspirational; however, never knowing how the day would develop was disquieting. Incidentally, I didn't like the outfit Jess made me wear in *Blood of Fu Manchu*. I felt it was almost comical.

FANG: Jack Taylor (see page 50) says Jess was not an intellectual, but rather a



Rohm didn't have to always get along with Klaus Kinski (seen here in *Five Golden Dragons*) to co-star with him in several pictures.

"doer"—someone who lived to move and express himself. Is he correct?

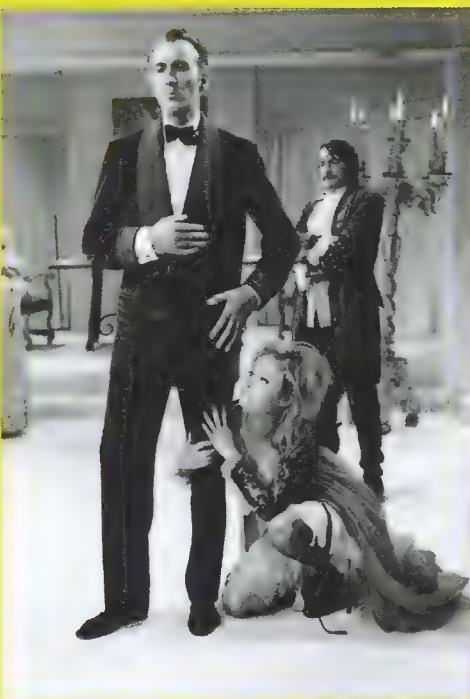
ROHM: Jack is right; Jess was more emotion- and feeling-based—after all, he was a jazz musician at heart. Mind you, when Jess explained the supposed symbolism in some of the scenes, I had a hard time following his thoughts. I never quite understood how an audience would get them without any kind of explanation. It could be said that Jess was at the mercy of his feelings; that's why his work was so uneven. He could be a genius one day, uninvolved and lackluster the next.

FANG: *99 Women* is a classic dark drama—and one that was incredibly influential on the women-in-prison subgenre. What are your memories of that film, and of acting opposite Herbert Lom and Mercedes McCambridge?

ROHM: Apropos of what you said, I remember Jess shooting almost half an hour of screen time in one week for *99 Women*, truly inspired and excellent footage—and I wouldn't say the same about the Fu Manchu films. I really liked Herbert Lom a lot. We were in a few films together, and used to talk on the phone until shortly before his death. He was such a perfect gentleman! We came from the same part of the world with similar backgrounds, and had an instinctive understanding of each other. Mercedes McCambridge, on the other hand, was a powerhouse. Apart from being a great actress, she was also a very strong person.

Her feelings seemed to simmer just below the surface very impatiently, waiting to burst through. She was always perfectly nice, but I felt a little intimidated all the same. By the way, just between you and me, I do not like that somebody in France inserted pornographic scenes into that film. The inserts are obviously not me, and they change the whole tone of the picture for the worse, in more ways than one.

FANG: The pictures that Towers mounted for Franco are among his best. What was it about their relationship that worked?



No woman can resist falling at the feet of Christopher Lee (with Rohm in *Eugenie*).

ROHM: This is going to sound odd, but I believe it was me. I understood them both, and was able to communicate Harry's point of view to Jess and vice versa. I was often Harry's ambassador on the set. Harry set the pictures up, but did not believe in interfering with the directors; once he hired somebody, it was for better or for worse, so to speak. He did not

hover over them, but trusted them to do the best they could. Also, Harry was normally setting up his next film, so he generally didn't spend a lot of time on the set, which seemed to work out fine. We talked every day on the phone, so if there was an underlying problem, we would try to find a solution in the very early stages.

FANG: *Venus in Furs* is another dreamy Towers/Franco masterpiece. Any distinct memories of making this one?

ROHM: James Darren was very laidback and serious. He often sang between takes, which was very pleasant. Then there was Dennis Price, a total sweetheart! We shot

"We could see through [Klaus Kinski's] tantrums, and realized that he'd had a difficult early life."

the majority of the film in Istanbul, which is a very old, exciting and historically interesting place. Margaret and Klaus felt like family, so I was very comfortable. Barbara McNair kept to herself a lot; she didn't mix or mingle much. Somebody recently mentioned that Manfred Mann's music had been taken out on the American DVD. I thought that was very strange, as the music was great and such a big part of the story.

FANG: Franco and Towers' *Count Dracula* is incredibly underrated, as is your performance as Mina.

ROHM: Thank you! There were creative differences between Harry and Jess, so *Dracula* was the last film we made together. We had limited but pleasant contact with him after our working relationship ended, however.

FANG: You co-starred with the late Soledad Miranda in *Dracula*. Do you recall much about her?

ROHM: It was a great shock when we heard about Soledad's [fatal car] accident. She was a very nice lady with a

(continued on page 81)



A welcome presence on camera, Rohm was equally at home behind it.

FANGORIA PRESENTS

MONSTER OF THE MONTH



ART: ANDRÉ BUCKER

"The Devil" from "Devil Hunter"

One of the handful of Jess Franco's quickie French cannibal shockers made in the immediate wake of Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust*, 1980's *Devil Hunter* (a.k.a. *The Man Hunter*, *Sexo Canibal* and more) is a deeply weird offering notable for getting slapped with the UK's dreaded "video nasty" handle, which quickly pushed the film into a sort of near-mythical territory it didn't really deserve. Though it stars Italian genre hero Al Cliver, from Lucio Fulci's equally censor-baiting *Zombie*, horror fans who sought *Hunter* out looking for garish, pulpy and operatically gory jungle-ghoul thrills scratched their collective heads when what they actually got was another meandering bit of dive-bomb-lensed Franco voyeurism. Available fully uncut on DVD from Severin Films, *Devil Hunter* is loaded with enough exposed female flesh to fill the island of Motoul and showcases a hulking, well-hung cannibal god who runs rampant, eating women's most intimate areas with savage silliness.

Said carnivorous sex monster (played by Burt Altman) is actually an eerie if cheap creation. A completely nude black man with ebony Silly Putty stuck to his face and bulging eyes represented by embedded ping-pong balls streaked with red, he stalks his island home accepting bound gifts of screaming women whom he goes down on and dines upon. When he makes his few treasured appearances on screen, Franco inexplicably smears the lens with Vaseline and cranks up an aggravating and somewhat skin-crawling tapestry of groans and drones on the soundtrack. It's all part of the disorientation *Devil Hunter* splats around with wild abandon.

This cannibal demon—the "devil" of the title—is a quality bit of libidinous evil, a flawed monster in a typically wonky but distinctive slice of vintage Francophilia. Old Ping-Pong-Ball-Eyes is our Monster of the Month. See him. Love him. Lock up your daughters.

—Chris Alexander

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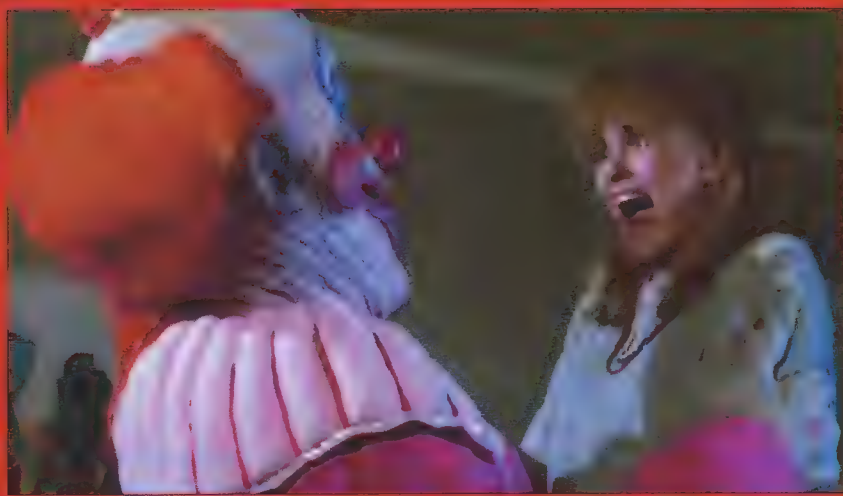
KILLER KLOWNS

from
OUTER SPACE

PAINTED FACE-OFF

For the film's 25th anniversary, we chat with the lead actors who faced freaky funnymen from beyond the stars.

By MICHAEL GINGOLD



Suzanne Snyder says that in moments like this, it wasn't hard to feel her character's fear.

Back in the late '80s, makeup and monster FX were flourishing on big screens in a string of low-budget features—the last hurrah of the theatrical horror B-picture before home video took over. Easily the most unique of these films was 1988's *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, the brainchild of Stephen, Charles and Edward Chiodo, FX-wizard brothers previously responsible for such popular characters as “Large Marge” in *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure* and the carnivorous furballs of the *Crittters* flicks.

For their debuts as director (Stephen), writers (Stephen and Charles) and producers (all three), the Chiodos repurposed the formula of countless '50s alien-invasion flicks—most notably *The Blob*—to tell the story of greasepaint-faced extraterrestrials that invade a small town. As they track human prey with balloon-sculpture dogs, zap them with cotton-candy guns and imprison them in balloons, only young couple Mike Tobacco (Grant Cramer) and Debbie Stone (Suzanne Snyder)

can save the day—with the dubious help of ice-cream vendors the Terenzi Brothers (Michael Siegel and Peter Licassi), and the interference of disapproving cop Sgt. Curtis Moonney (John Vernon). Fango sat down with Cramer—currently working with the Chiodos to develop the sequel *The Return of the Killer Klowns from Outer Space in 3D*—and Snyder at Gettysburg, PA's Horrorfind Weekend to reminisce about their parts in the colorful cult classic.

FANGORIA: How did you each come to be involved with *Killer Klowns*?

GRANT CRAMER: The Chiodos had patterned the characters after friends they knew growing up, so they wanted to find that same combination. They were really into how people matched up together, so they kept having us come back and back and back to audition in different combinations. There'd be a bunch of us waiting in a room, and they would bring us in in different groups, and we'd go home and think we gonna get the call that we

got the job, and then we'd come back and do it *again*.

SUZANNE SNYDER: My agent read the script, and she loved campy horror films and told me, “You have to do this film. This is gonna be a cult classic.” Even back then, she said, “This is gonna stand out as something unique and unusual.”

FANG: When you were doing all that mixing and matching, did you audition with any future stars?

CRAMER: I brought in a friend of mine, Crystal Bernard, who ended up having a pretty nice career, but Suzanne beat her and got the part.

SNYDER: My agent really wanted her boyfriend, Thom Mathews, to get it. She tried to package us together, because Thom and I had just done *Return of the Living Dead Part II*.

CRAMER: I was friendly with Thom too, and also with George Clooney; he was



This may be one of the few '80s youth films where the stars were intentionally dressed down.

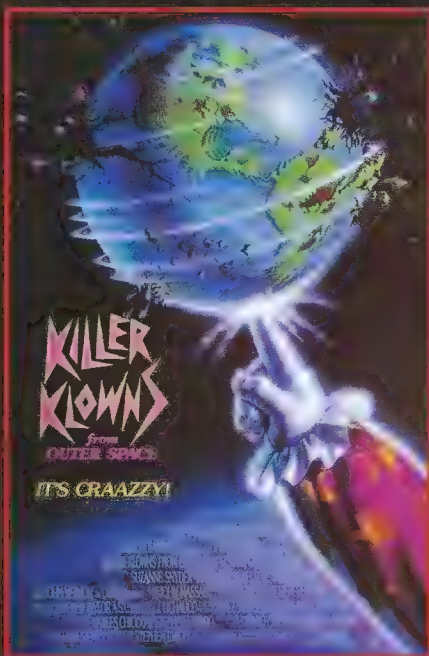
Thom's best friend at the time. We went to the same acting school and we'd be at three or four auditions a day, so everyone kind of knew each other.

FANG: Did Clooney audition for *Killer Klowns*?

CRAMER: I don't think he did. I believe he was doing *The Facts of Life* or something at the time.

FANG: How long was *Killer Klowns*' shoot? Did it have to be tight because of the low budget?

CRAMER: You know, the funny thing is, we had a week of rehearsal and six weeks of shooting, and nowadays, that's reserved for big-budget movies. Six weeks was a low-budget film back then, but



today it's a \$10-million movie. We actually had a fair amount of time—we went up a week early, sat around a table, got to know each other and hung out.

SNYDER: It was lovely. It was a nice way to get to know your fellow cast and create relationships, so we already had them when we started the film.

FANG: *Killer Klowns* works because it's a very silly idea played straight, without winking at the camera. How did you approach that in terms of your performances? SNYDER: Well [laughs], clowns are really scary-looking! When that one grabbed me by the shoulders, it did kind of hurt, and when you think about a giant anything lifting you up when you're small and not strong enough to defend yourself, it's frightening, right? So it wasn't hard to get there.

CRAMER: At the time, being young actors, we were all in classes trying to learn the Stanislavski method and how to be real, so my emphasis was on doing that kind of Robert De Niro acting. But Stephen Chiodo said, "No, no, no—you're like our buddy Mike Tobacco back home, and



Killer Klowns from Outer Space come in all shapes and sizes, and will all wipe the smile off your face.

he's *always* hyper. He's always emotional." Every scene, he'd push me; he'd say, "I want you up, I want you bigger, I want you frantic!" I constantly thought I was overacting, every minute, and I felt uncomfortable. Now, since I've been doing it for so long, I'm much more at ease playing many different tones, but at the time, I had to trust him that it was going to turn out all right. And now when I watch it, I see that it works perfectly for the movie he wanted to make.

SNYDER: In a way, we were accessories to the Klowns.

CRAMER: We were really playing the '50s-movie boyfriend and girlfriend. It was a homage, and the Chiodos wanted us to be the old-fashioned, slightly overacting characters from those classic monster movies. That's what they wanted to plug into their film to make it work.

SNYDER: And they put us in very muted colors—beiges and grays—so the Klowns would pop, too.

CRAMER: We never changed our clothes the whole movie. There was that brown sweater I wore the whole time.

FANG: Were the Terenzi Brothers, Michael Siegel and Peter Licassi, as crazy off-camera as they were on?

SNYDER: They were really nice guys, and so funny off the set.

CRAMER: They were kind of just like that. The Chiodos hired them because they were actually a standup comedy

team; they were best friends, and that was their routine, that banter all the time. They were always very funny, and almost one unit. I never really thought of them separately.

FANG: How about John Vernon in the straighter role of Sgt. Mooney?

CRAMER: I loved him. A lot of people thought he was a bit of a curmudgeon; he was an older actor, didn't suffer fools and was set in his ways. A couple of friends who had worked with him before were like, "Whoa, watch out for John!" But I love older actors with big personalities, so I just stood there and enjoyed him, myself.

SNYDER: I agree. He was a gentleman

"[The Klowns] were kind of like masterpieces. They were works of art."

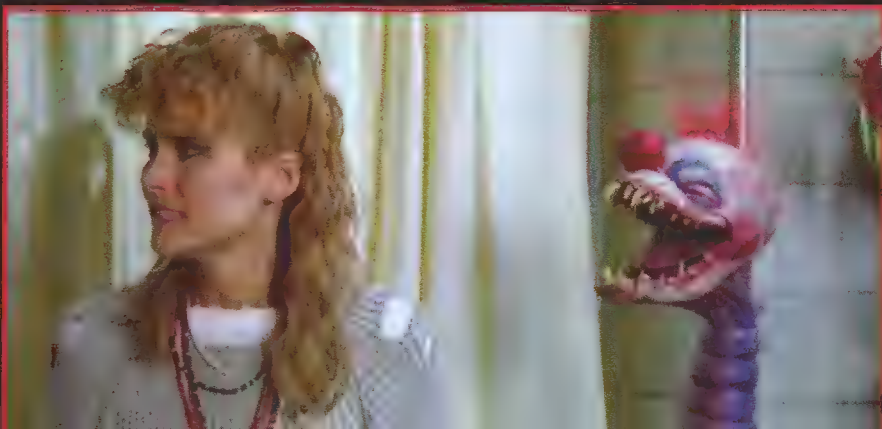
—Suzanne Snyder

and very kind, and I enjoyed how he approached the job and his character, and what he brought to the set. He brought so much history with him, unlike all of us.

CRAMER: [John Vernon voice] Josey Wales!

SNYDER: It was exciting to watch him work. You really couldn't fake it with him.

CRAMER: Talk about making you be present—he was right there, boom, in your face, so you didn't want to not be there or



You never know what will pop up when the Chiodos are in charge.



Debbie (Snyder) and Mike (Grant Cramer) had better keep watching the skies—and their funnybones.



Playing it subtle wasn't an option when faced with such outrageous adversaries.

be unprepared.

FANG: Having read the script, what were your impressions of the Klowns when you saw them in the flesh, so to speak?

SNYDER: They were kind of like masterpieces. They were works of art.

CRAMER: We went out to the Chiodos' shop and saw them while they were being constructed, and that was exciting. After we got the job, it was several months before we started shooting because they had to create all the Clown masks and creatures. They would sculpt them out and try them over and over again. They had multiples—for each major Clown, there was a suit one person would wear, another to get thrown on the ground and beat up and another they could work with controls that would move its face and open its mouth and bare its teeth and lift its eyebrows. We were all like kids in a candy store, just watching how they did everything.

FANG: Suzanne, you're in a major scene with purely animatronic creatures: the popcorn Klowns in the bathroom. What was that like to shoot?

SNYDER: It was a very tight space, but it was fun. The Chiodos really know how to do that stuff; they're masters at it. So they led me through it, told me exactly what was gonna happen and when we were going to stop and reset everything. That

put me at ease, and they were so kind and patient, it worked out great. And it was fascinating to watch what was going to happen before I did it.

FANG: Having most of the effects done live must have been an advantage, as opposed to current films where so much is digitally added later.

SNYDER: That was nice, and for the scenes where they weren't, the Chiodos would have drawings we could look at. Because they're artists, they could describe what was going to be there so well.

CRAMER: What was fun was that they had a huge warehouse where all the spaceship interiors were shot, and every day we would go in and see this funhouse stuff they'd been creating, and that was a blast. We'd arrive and they'd say, "We have the balloon room or so-and-so finished," and they'd just be done painting it practically the night before we'd be in there shooting that section.

It was bizarre, because some things seemed silly when we were doing them; I mean, the thing everybody wants me to sign [on pictures] more than anything else is "Another door." You know, the little Russian-doll doors, where we keep on opening them and there's another one and

another one, and it's like, "Another door!" When you're doing it, you just think, how do you play that? It's the silliest thing, and that ended up being the scene that cracks people up.

FANG: Where did you first see the film? Was there a cast-and-crew screening, or did you catch it when it opened theatrically?

CRAMER: No, we had a couple of nice screenings. The funny thing is, the movie didn't open very big, but back then, *everything* opened. Nowadays, with small mov-

**"The Chiodos wanted us to be the old-fashioned, slightly overacting characters from those classic monster movies."
—Grant Cramer**

ies like that, only one in a thousand gets released theatrically. So *Killer Klowns* did not have a big theatrical, but by today's standards it would've been a smashing success—we had a full-page ad in *The Los Angeles Times*. These days, it would be a big accomplishment to get that sort of release for a little movie.

FANG: What kind of reactions did you get to the film back then?

CRAMER: You know who got it? This was totally ironic: When we made the movie, we thought it was a cool, kooky thing that could catch on with fans, but what surprised us all was that pretty much every critic liked it. *LA Weekly*, which was the free newspaper everybody picks up, gave it the Pick of the Week, the *LA Times* gave it a rave and the *Herald Examiner* called it the funniest movie of the year. Somehow, they all got the absolute uniqueness and individuality and creativity of the film. Purely from an actor's point of view, we

Photo: Michael Gingold



Today, Snyder and Cramer ain't afraid of no Klowns.

were not what people loved about it—hopefully, we were doing our jobs and fulfilling the needs of the movie, but truly, it was the Chiodos' creativity that made *Killer Klowns* as popular as it has become.

(Special thanks to Sean Clark.)

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THE VIDE EYE of Dr. Cyclops



The debunking of occult frauds has been a popular topic in movies lately, so it's appropriate that Synapse Films should now unveil **HANDS OF THE RIPPER** as its latest Hammer Horror Collection title in a Blu-ray/DVD combo (out July 9). Its protagonist, Dr. John Pritchard (Eric Porter), exposes fraudulent seances in



Edwardian London, and in the course of one he comes across an even more fascinating subject: a young woman, Anna (Angharad Rees), who witnessed her mother's murder by her father—none other than Jack the Ripper—when she was a child. Now, certain stimuli set off her own urge to kill, and Dr. Pritchard, a follower of Freud, intends to use those new psychoanalytic techniques to determine what's behind her violent outbursts. His interest in her crosses professional and ethical boundaries, adding an extra level of tension to a scenario already rife with unseemly behavior and outbursts of graphic gore. Made at a time when Hammer was starting to send Dracula into contemporary settings, *Hands* feels more modern in its storytelling than usual for the studio while bearing its traditional period veneer, which is resplendent in the 1.66:1 widescreen transfer.

The key supplement, Daniel Griffith's documentary "The Devil's Bloody Plaything," corrals everyone from director Peter Sasdy and, via audio recordings, the late Rees (who died last year) to Joe Dante and other horror historians, though its most fascinating figure is producer Aida Young, a rare woman to have achieved a hard-won position of prominence in British cinema at the time. There's lots of great trivia too (Dr. Pritchard's office was the same Pinewood Studios set where M hung out in the James Bond films); pretty much the only topic not addressed is whether Keith Bell, as Pritchard's son Michael, was intentionally

styled to so closely resemble Edgar Allan Poe. "Slaughter of Innocence: The Evolution of Hammer Gore" is a slideshow of gruesome highlights from the company's filmography (though many are counterproductively presented in black and white), and there's also an extensive international still gallery, the trailer and TV spots. Leaving no cobblestone unturned, Synapse even includes the audio (as the video was destroyed in a fire) of an introductory scene featuring Severn Darden that was filmed for *Hands'* 1977 ABC broadcast debut, to make up for deleted bloody bits.

CYCLOPS RATING: 
—Michael Gingold

If you were a teenage male genre fan in the mid-1980s, you probably remember the first time you saw Tobe Hooper's ridiculously wonderful **LIFEFORCE** (Shout! Factory) in the theater. In addition to all the spectacle \$23 million could buy, visual FX by John Dykstra and a stable of great British character actors, the film boasts the magnificently undraped charms of actress Mathilda May, perfectly cast as a creature meant to arouse the lust of all men: an unleashed vampiric female essence sent to Earth hidden within Halley's Comet. A very



enjoyable concoction that deftly combines sci-fi and horror into something resembling a Nigel Kneale movie genre-spliced with a later-era Hammer flick bursting with oodles of nudity, it could be affectionately referred to as *Quatermass and the Tit*. The healthy 1.6x9 transfers in this Blu-ray/DVD release breathe new visual life into the film (some tweaks in the colors, supervised by Hooper, might rankle theatrical-print purists, but didn't bother this fan), making it look just as good if not better than it did upon its initial release. The audio tracks are equally well-treated, presenting Henry Mancini's epic, choir-laced orchestral score in all its

adventure-laden glory. Both discs contain the director's overseas cut, which runs a full 15 minutes longer than the theatrical version (though Hooper did oversee and approve of the edit); the latter can be found on the Blu-ray as well.

This packed special edition will satisfy the most rabid fans of Hooper's underloved, bonkers movie. The director and stars Steve Railsback and May each have a separate featurette in which they discuss their unique contributions to and perspectives on *Life Force*, and an archival EPK boasts lots of great behind-the-scenes footage. In addition, beyond the usual trailers, TV spots and still gallery, there are commentaries by Hooper and mechanical FX wiz Nick Maley that exemplify the best and worst this kind of extra can offer. Moderator Tim Sullivan rambles even more than Hooper on his meandering track, while Michael Felsher asks focused and logical questions of Maley that get to the heart of the info fans want to hear. A wonderful example of a genre film that doesn't take itself too seriously even as it showcases the apocalypse, *Life Force* is a worthy purchase for any movie fan who wants to revisit a time when genre films could be chock full of nudity and exploding people without embarrassment or pretentiousness.

CYCLOPS RATING: 
—Scooter McCrae

Over his career as a horror/sci-fi writer/director, Jeff Lieberman never made the same movie twice. He followed up the nature-amok opus *Squirm*, the drug/conspiracy thriller *Blue Sunshine* and the backwoods-survival shocker *Just Before Dawn* with **REMOTE CONTROL**, a more lighthearted approach to alien invasion that manages to be simultaneously homagistic and meta—before meta was hip in the genre. Kevin Dillon stars as Cosmo, a muscle-shirted employee of a large video store (pointedly set inside a former movie theater) who begins to suspect that the newly arrived tape of the title is doing more than entertaining its watchers. A '50s-set flick involving aliens who use "futuristic" video technology to

control the minds of humans, the aptly titled *Remote Control* turns out to be doing just that in real life, with deadly results. As Cosmo and gal pal Belinda (Deborah Goodrich) set out to stop the conspiracy behind the transformative tapes, Lieberman tells his tale very much in the form of the vintage flicks that inspired it, from shooting style to set design (plus the fact that "heroine" Belinda is pretty useless in tense situations), against a backdrop of



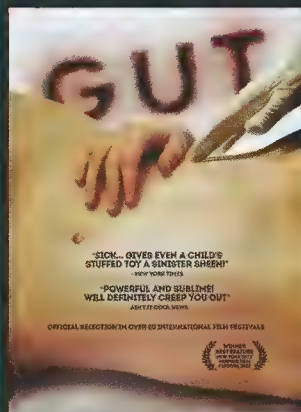
very '80s tropes like aerobics, with amusing results. Lieberman is self-distributing *Remote Control* himself (via www.jefflibermandirector.com), offering widescreen DVDs and Blu-rays with very attractive transfers (the bold colors especially pop in hi-def). He also contributes a laid-back commentary, pointing out the ways in which he brought his themes of a literal "home video invasion" to life on screen, as well as influences ranging from Brian De Palma to *Barbarella*. "The movie works so much better now than when I made it," he says, and he's probably right. There's also a still gallery that incorporates a number of eye-catching foreign posters, plus proof that little actor Jamie McEnnan really did resemble Lieberman at age 8.

CYCLOPS RATING: 
—Michael Gingold

To those outside cult-film circles, a title like **NINJA III: THE DOMINATION** (Shout! Factory) indicates a particular cinematic experience, serving as a rabbit hole into B-movie madness. But if you're attracted by the campy, lovably low-budget combat, you're going to stay for the unpredictable insanity that follows, as the incorporation of possession, exorcism and inexplicable mysticism makes *Ninja III* unforgettably fun. Of course, the story makes little sense, the acting is hollow and some of the FX are hilariously ill-conceived, but the

DISC OF THE MONTH

As its DVD commentary points out, you don't actually see any guts in **GUT** (Vanguard), but that doesn't prevent this independent winner from getting deep under your skin. As much as its moments of bodily violation, the effectiveness of writer/director Elias' movie hinges on the performances and chemistry of Jason Vail and Nicholas Wilder as longtime friends and co-workers Tom and Dan. Tom is the more grown-up of the two, but married life with his wife Lily (Sarah Schoofs) and young daughter Katie (Kirsti-anna and Kaitlyn Mueller) has him starting to chafe, and overgrown adolescent Dan is able to tempt Tom to come over to his place and watch a DVD he has just gotten ahold of. It turns out to contain a snuff movie, and while Tom is at first appalled, he still can't get the disc's contents out of his mind. Similarly fascinated, Dan begins exploring deeper, until both become caught up in a horrific situation they can't extricate themselves from. With its deliberate pacing building to some true



creep-outs in the second half, you may find *Gut* difficult to shake as well; the DVD's 1.85:1 transfer grants the proceedings a naturalistic sheen that makes the scenario all the more unsettling.

A trio of featurettes offer revealing looks behind an assortment of different scenes, spotlighting the jovial attitude on the set of this dark tale, the process by which makeup FX artist Josh Turi crafted the all-important full-body casts and how Elias explained difficult scenes to one of the little Mueller twins. (By the way, don't even look at the Special Features menu until you've watched the movie, as the title of one of these pieces gives away a latecoming plot development.) Even better is that commentary by the writer/director and Chad Bernhard, a.k.a. Chvad SB, composer of the minimal, sometimes discordant and discomfiting music. This dialogue between longtime friends gets surprisingly personal as Bernhard presses Elias about his inspirations and creative process, and the real-life bases behind a few key scenes are divulged, even as they also take time here and there to reference subjects like the Charlie Sheen/Emilio Estevez flick *Men at Work* and really bad sequels.

CYCLOPS RATING:

—Michael Gingold

movie's true appeal is how definitive it is of the '80s, intertwining popular trends, music and fashions of the time into the sweaty story of a blue-collar aerobics instructor (Lucinda Dickey) overtaken by the soul of an indestruc-

tible Asian assassin, who uses her body to exact revenge on those responsible for his demise. Ninja fans will already find plenty to love, but it's inconceivable to think that any cinephile could dislike the film's passionately all-in story-

telling, no matter how ridiculous the content.

Director Sam Firstenberg seems cognizant of his movie's lack of focus and compensates with pure entertainment value, throwing in a synthesizer score (by Udi Harpaz and Misha Segal) worth championing and setpieces that are



alternately hilarious and physically impressive. While this remains a testosterone-laden action flick, rife with era-indicative misogyny and glorified stereotypes, Firstenberg does showcase the iron-willed and bad-ass Dickey as the story's anchor while complementing her with genre heavyweights Sho Kosugi and James Hong. With elements of horror and dark comedy laced throughout, *Ninja III* is a refreshing trip down memory lane into a world of cheap, gonzo martial-arts flicks that have been replaced lately by much less imaginative fare. Special features supporting the impressive widescreen transfers are scant but satisfying, including a nostalgia-inducing trailer and a terrific commentary by Firstenberg and stunt coordinator Steve Lambert. It's essential listening as Lambert does most of the talking, obsessively praising his own off-camera ingenuities, while Firstenberg contributes off-kilter trivia about various scenes.

CYCLOPS RATING: —Ken Hanley

When a movie on the scale of Tommy Wirkola's **HANSEL & GRETEL: WITCH HUNTERS** (Paramount) runs under 90 minutes in theaters, the suspicion is always that a lot got left on the cutting room floor—scenes that might have deepened the characters and story. The addition of about 10 minutes to the Blu-ray (which comes with a DVD containing the theatrical cut, also available separately) doesn't add much aesthetic meat to the bones of this movie, which remains stronger in parts than as a whole,

but it does deliver on the packaging's promise of "Intense new footage not seen in theaters." Among the restored bits are villainess Muriel (Famke Janssen) and her wicked cronies doing something terrible to a small child, ruthless Sheriff Berringer (Peter Stormare) committing a cold-blooded and bloody murder to assert his authority and a witch under interrogation suggesting that Hansel (Jeremy Renner) and Gretel (Gemma Arterton) do something very unbrotherly and unsisterly with each other. The 2.35:1 transfers, especially the hi-def edition, are gorgeous, bursting with color and rich with atmosphere, accompanied by full-blooded audio in Dolby Digital 5.1 (DVD) and Dolby TrueHD 5.1 (Blu-ray). (A 3D Blu-ray wasn't available for review by presstime.)

Unique to the Blu-ray are a trio of featurettes in which, er, which the material covering the FX is, not surprisingly, the highlight. "Meet Edward the Troll" gets under the faux skin of the movie's best creation: a huge, lumbering beast played by Derek Mears, who relates the challenges of being encased in a suit and head



that left him acting blind while everyone else extols his performance and the advantages of playing against an existing

creature. "The Witching Hour" offers similar detail about the sorceresses themselves, as created by Mike Elizalde and his Spectral Motion team plus the European prosthetics artists from Twilight Creations, with plenty of cool concept sketches and video of the international coven being made up. "Reinventing Hansel & Gretel" is a typical EPK-esque segment with a decent amount of glimpses behind the scenes, mutual admiration among the cast and filmmakers and Wirkola revealing his own onscreen part in the gory action.

CYCLOPS RATING: —Michael Gingold

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LATEST HORROR NEWS FANGORIA

shanks

for the Memories

The disc release of his last film as director shines new light on the career of William Castle.

By SUSAN SVEHLA and MICHAEL GINGOLD

Legendary genre showman William Castle did it all: Directing, producing, writing and acting. But his real forte was promotion. Newspaper ads grabbed excited kids as they awaited the arrival of the latest horror romp in Emergo, Percepto or Illusion-O. The world hasn't seen the likes of him since.

Last month, Olive Films made one of the final and most unusual chapters of Castle's career available on DVD and Blu-ray at long last, releasing his last feature as director, 1974's *Shanks*. This one didn't come accompanied by seats wired to shock or inflatable skeletons floating over audiences' heads; its "gimmick" lay in its unusual casting: world-famous mime Marcel Marceau in his first lead role, following supporting turns in various short and European films and the 1968 cult classic *Barbarella*.

Marceau actually plays two parts in Castle's film. One is deaf-mute puppeteer Malcolm Shanks, who lives with his obnoxious, widowed sister-in-law and her latest husband (played by fellow mimes Tsilla Chelton and Philippe Clay), and whose best friend is a young girl named Celia (Cindy Eilbacher, a familiar face from '70s TV, including the horror tele-movies *Crowhaven Farm* and *Bad Ronald*). With the help of heavy makeup, Marceau also portrays Mr. Walker, an elderly scientist who enlists Malcolm in his experiments with reanimating dead animals. When Mr. Walker dies, Malcolm uses his techniques to bring him back to life, followed by other cadavers, which Malcolm manipulates like life-sized puppets.

The lead character in the movie, which went through a few other titles including *Childhood of the Dead* and *Shock*, was initially intended to be much younger, but that changed, and Castle found his star after seeing Marceau's one-man show in Los Angeles. "The theater was full of young people," Castle told UPI's Vernon Scott during *Shanks*' production, "and you'd have thought they were listening to The Beatles. They gave him standing ovations. I went back a second time and it was the same... I knew if an artist of this magnitude could translate his talent to a

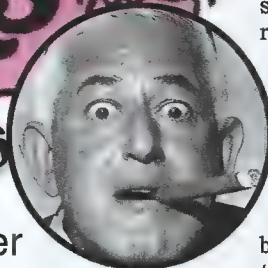
screen performance, it would be a real milestone."

Castle overhauled Randal Graham's script, creating the dual role for Marceau, who was enthusiastic about the opportunity to take the lead, having turned down a number of cameos after *Barbarella*. "I love the fantastique," he explained to Joseph Bell of the Christian Science Monitor Service, "but a few years ago, I would have had no chance of consideration for such work. You know the maskmakers—the producers? They all thought there was no face under my mime mask. Bill Castle is the first producer who has seen that face under the mask, and he will show in this film Marceau himself"—at least, in

the Malcolm role.

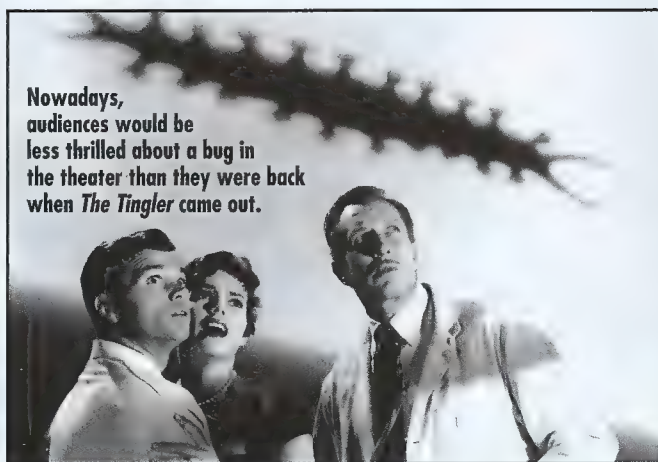
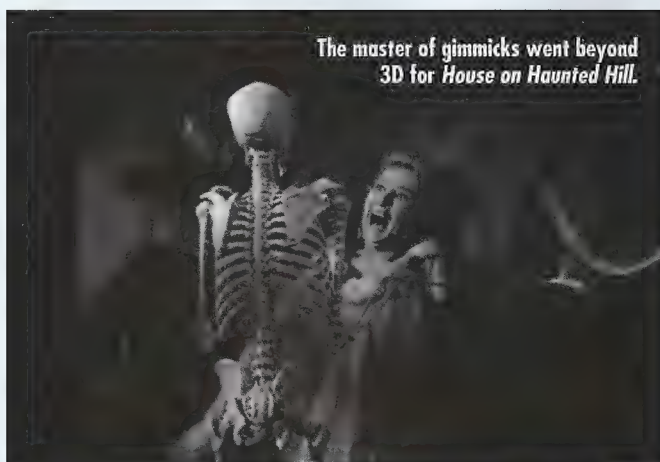
A Paramount Pictures production, *Shanks* was lensed on the studio's Hollywood soundstages and locations in Vancouver, Canada. "On the first day of shooting it was a little difficult," Castle recalled to Scott at the time, "because Marceau is used to directing his own show. By the second day he began to have faith in me and what we are doing. Now he's the most cooperative actor I've ever worked with. And the best. Marceau thinks he is a genius—and he actually is one." Later, in his autobiography *Step Right Up! I'm Gonna Scare the Pants Off America*, Castle recalled the collaboration as more fractious, with creative disagreements about everything from the costuming to the music.

The movie was not a success in theaters, and didn't receive any sort of video release until Olive's discs, turning up only once in a while on late-night TV. It was an atypical obscurity in a showy career, one born of Castle's love of movies—a bug he first caught when he stole money from his sister's purse to see the play *Dracula* 13 times. He talked his way into meeting his hero, who was intrigued by the youngster and asked if he wanted to watch the show from backstage. "Bela Lugosi was a humble, gentle man, quite unlike the roles he portrayed," Castle wrote in *Step Right Up!* "Every chance I had after that, I watched the special world of horror and fear from backstage. I knew then what I wanted to



It made sense that one of the most prominent voices on the '60s horror scene later gave Marcel Marceau a lead speaking role in *Shanks*.

Photo: Copyright Paramount



do with my life—I wanted to scare the pants off audiences.”

Lugosi recommended the then-15-year-old for the job of assistant stage manager of the roadshow of *Dracula*. Castle dropped out of school and took the job, leading to a number of roles in musicals

parted ways—and Castle and his wife wound up mortgaging their house for him to make his first fright feature, *Macabre* (1958).

Castle and his screenwriter Robb White were heavily influenced by the wildly popular French thriller *Diabolique*

with ghostly sounds and visions, building up to a major fright when a skeleton rises from a vat of acid. Knowing he had to top the insurance-policy gimmick, Castle came up with Emerg-O, which had an inflatable skeleton rigged to fly over the audience's heads. Crowds, especially the movie-loving youth market, went wild; in a 1959 newspaper interview, Price said, “When we premiered the picture in Baltimore, the audience stampeded. One hundred and fifty seats were broken. ‘No one ever will come back,’ moaned the theater manager. He was wrong. For the next three weeks *House on Haunted Hill* played to capacity houses.”

Price encored in perhaps Castle's most famous picture, *The Tingler* (1959), as a doctor researching fear who believes the title creature exists in everyone's spine, and only screaming will keep it from growing. Besides incorporating a then-shocking color sequence, Castle decided to have his audiences truly experience the movie; thus was born Percepto. When the *Tingler* gets loose in a theater, Price urges those watching to “Scream—scream for your lives!” as buzzers installed under select seats gave them a literal jolt. Castle claimed the studio spent a small fortune sending special FX teams to theaters to install the equipment; it was probably more like the owners getting a box with directions and maybe a screwdriver, but either way, the crowds had a grand old time getting their asses tingled.

For 1960's *13 Ghosts*, Castle decided to use a visual gimmick to terrorize his fans, who were given “ghost viewing” glasses allowing them to see the fearsome spirits. This gimmick, Illusion-O, required no special equipment, and thus more theaters, including drive-ins, could show the film. *Homicidal* (1961) offered one of his most radical audience teasers, involving the Fright Break. Two minutes before the film's end, the director's voice comes on, giving anyone too scared to watch the rest of the movie a minute to leave the theater, get their admission refunded—and wait in the “Coward's Corner.” The joke was on moviegoers when they discovered that the two leads, a man and woman, were really one

(continued on page 81)

“On the first day of shooting [*Shanks*] it was a little difficult, because Marceau is used to directing his own show.”

—William Castle

and other productions. But Tinseltown was where Castle wanted to be, and in 1937 he talked his way into a gig at Columbia, where he took bit parts in B-movies and set about learning everything there was to know about directing. This eagerness lead studio topper Harry Cohn to allow Castle to helm B-pictures such as *Klondike Kate* (1943) and the well-reviewed thriller *The Whistler* (1944), based on the popular radio series. Castle bought the rights to the *Inner Sanctum* novel *If I Die Before I Wake* and took it to Columbia, hoping to direct a feature version; with Cohn out of town, the story editor rejected the project because the leading lady turned out to be the murderer. Undeterred, Castle sent the script to Orson Welles, who loved it and took Castle on as associate producer of his classic *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947).

Castle left Columbia in 1948, upset that he had never gotten an A-picture to direct. Universal quickly put him under a three-year contract, but once again, he was relegated to bottom-of-the-barrel B-movies. He returned to Columbia after his Universal deal expired; according to Castle, Cohn regretted allowing him to leave and promised him better films. Unfortunately, that turned out to be an empty assurance; his welcome back was *Serpent of the Nile* (1953), a low-budget opus produced by B-specialist Sam Katzman. Castle's second stint at Columbia saw him helm 17 films in three years; he was a reliable director who could turn in a solid film in any genre—Westerns, mysteries, crime/noir, adventures and war films. But Castle had dreams of “scaring the pants off America,” and he and Cohn

(1955), though *Macabre* was officially based on Anthony Boucher's novel *The Marble Forest* (written as “Theo Durrant”). Allied Artists distributed the film, and Castle became a media star by ingeniously



offering an insurance policy to every audience member, guaranteeing them \$1,000 if they died of fright. People flocked to the theaters, seething with excitement to find out what could be so terrifying, and each one filled out an insurance form issued by Lloyd's of London.

Vincent Price starred in Castle and White's next collaboration, *House on Haunted Hill* (1959), as a man who invites a group of people to his home, offering them a small fortune if they make it through the night. Their ordeal is filled

V/H/S/2

MORE TAPES OF WRATH

The found-footage franchise goes to even scarier places the second time around.

By SAMUEL ZIMMERMAN



"A Ride in the Park" can give you a hell of an appetite.

Your mileage and tolerance may vary when it comes to found footage, but it's difficult to deny that the storytelling device (as opposed to the genre) is fascinating. From the basic, ever-expanding influence of ground-floor viral video to the idea of bringing raw verisimilitude to the fantastic (a natural extension of the Everyman facing the unknown) to the notion that all the lo-fi mayhem may actually require a sophisticated level of orchestration, cinema *scarité* done right can still be both impressive and power-

ful. It leads to the question, "Can you organize chaos?"—to which the step up from the point-of-view anthology *V/H/S* to its sequel *V/H/S/2* would answer, "You have to."

It seems that both the production and reception of 2012's sometimes unsettling, sometimes messy omnibus wrought unintended and unorganized unruliness. The oft-repeated factoid that its contributing filmmakers were mostly unaware of what the others were doing led to critics interpreting a sexually aggressive thematic streak whose perceived seediness tainted the subversive perspective in the likes of David Bruckner's "Amateur Night." Carrying over from that film's wraparound segment, *You're Next* and *A Horrible Way to Die* filmmakers and unofficial *V/H/S* guides Simon Barrett and Adam Wingard, as well as the producers, believed both aspects needed to be addressed—the latter full-frontally, with a sense of humor.

"The filmmakers communicated a lot more on this movie than on the first one," Barrett says. "On the original, everyone was brought in by different pro-

ducers; I believe Adam and I were the only ones who had any awareness of what the overall project was going to be. On *V/H/S/2*, we made sure to share footage with everyone, and we all knew each other's scripts, so it was much more of a coordinated effort. Even though we still weren't quite sure what order everything was going to be in until we saw the final cuts of each project, we had a pretty good idea from the very beginning."

That coordinated effort on *V/H/S/2* (currently on demand and beginning theatrical exposure July 12 from Magnet Releasing) continued the first film's apparent mission of exposing audiences to new, vibrant genre talent. Exploding with films like *The Raid: Redemption*, *Macabre* and *Hobo With a Shotgun*, Gareth Huw Evans, Timo Tjahjanto and Canadian delinquent Jason Eisener respectively

"That was the big challenge: Making a scene look like it's happening for the first time when you're shooting it the seventh."

—Eduardo Sanchez, director

were eye-widening additions to the roster, but the presences of *Blair Witch Project* co-director Eduardo Sanchez and his long-time producer Gregg Hale announced *V/H/S/2* (originally titled *S-VHS*) as a true beast.

"Every single person gave it 100 percent," Barrett says. "Ideally, anthology films—and we had this experience a bit on *The ABC's of Death*—are like a fun competition. You want your piece to stand out, especially among 26 shorts like that. With *V/H/S*, it felt more like contributing to try and make it as good as possible. It's sometimes fun to work on an anthology with filmmakers you admire, and think, 'If

So many screens, so little hope...



they're going to do that, we have to respond in this way.' That, ideally, leads to a movie that feels coherent, even though it has different directors and crews. That's not always possible. We were very lucky with *V/H/S/2* that everybody was available at the exact same time. Adam, Eduardo and Gregg, Gareth and Timo and I—we all filmed basically simultaneously in different locations. Jason did his a couple of months later."

With the lineup and subjects in place, Barrett returned to the overarching mythology, this time making his directorial debut on *V/H/S/2*'s wraparound segment "Tape 49," allowing him to both expand his interests and flex his acting muscle in a humorous, voyeuristic—and fully nude—opening. "Adam definitely didn't want to do the wraparound again, because he directed it the first time and wanted to do a stand-alone short," Barrett explains. "I like working with Adam the way I do; the only downside is that I don't get to play with cameras very much. I was like, 'Oh, if I do the wraparound, I'll definitely have my fill of that for the next several years.' I wanted to do something technically challenging and stretch my brain in a way that screenwriting doesn't."

This allowed the writer to utilize his experience as a private investigator in "Tape 49," with the aim of introducing a more lighthearted lens with which to frame the other stories. "In the original, because a big part of the wraparound ended up being this failed sex tape, it gave that subtext to a lot of the segments," Barrett notes. "I felt like with the second film, we wanted to move past that, but I also wanted to address it in the opening moments and kind of put it out there like,



The evil E.T.s of "Alien Abduction Slumber Party" don't mind working with kids or animals either.

nature of the *V/H/S* narrative, suggests that Barrett and Wingard's line of thinking is not dissimilar to the Nigel Kneale-scripted UK TV movie *The Stone Tape*.

"Absolutely, *The Stone Tape* was a big influence," Barrett confirms. "If you pay attention to the overall *V/H/S* mythology—the reason they're watching videotapes, as opposed to DVDs or any of the other obvious current technologies—the whole idea is that using a medium that requires electromagnetic fields to create its content could affect the electromagnetic field of the viewer. Adam's segment, going back to that kind of *Stone Tape* idea of what ghosts are, is like a recording of people or creatures by their environment, and I thought about that a little bit and liked the idea that people feeling their most extreme emotions, such as when they're dying,

would record on the environment. It's not so much a ghost, it's a recording of a person's energy, the same way a tape records electromagnetic pulses and creates music or images."

"I grew up in a house that was right on a cemetery," Wingard reveals. "My backyard was a

graveyard. I was always very aware of the idea of ghosts, and I thought about that kind of stuff a lot. I had weird supernatural things happen to me when I was growing up, but it's kind of funny, because I've always felt it's in line with what Simon is saying in the movie. Simon probably doesn't believe this is typical, but I do believe things that people see as ghosts are not entities that think in the same way we normally would. I believe they're weird echoes, or things of that nature—

energy echoes. Also, if they're more malevolent—and I'm going way off the rails now—I've always thought that what some people see as ghosts, or Bigfoot or other creatures, are all the same thing. I feel there's a realm of interdimensional entities we don't know about, but sometimes come in contact with, and they're

"We made sure to share footage, and they all knew each other's scripts, so it was much more of a coordinated effort."

—Simon Barrett, writer/director

all one and the same in a lot of cases."

"I agree with Adam; it's just like trying to explain an iPhone to somebody 100 years ago," Sanchez adds.

"Or me, now," Barrett deadpans.

The supernatural, unexplainable and unbelievable are present throughout *V/H/S/2*, and Sanchez and Hale returned to the device they so influentially blew audiences away with in *The Blair Witch Project*—offering a surprisingly fresh take on the ever-tiring zombie. Enacting a first-person chronicle of transformation, a cyclist (played by Jay Saunders) and his GoPro helmet-cam in "A Ride in the Park," the directors and writer Jamie Nash hit notes that are equally gory, witty and eventually touching as the ghoul's humanity at times shines through. The thinking undead are rarely explored in this oversaturated subgenre, and Sanchez says, "I like the idea that it's an illness you can get over, but then, how do you explain having your body shot through and things like that? The only way it made sense was with our approach."

"He's still rotting," Wingard notes. "What makes sense in your short that I

(continued on page 81)



Eye spy negative energy made manifest in "Clinical Trials."

'Hey, we're not exploiting anyone other than ourselves with the *V/H/S* movies.'"

Also hopping in front of the camera was Wingard, in *V/H/S/2*'s first proper segment, "Clinical Trials." A classic omnibus take on just how much mankind was meant to know—and in this case, see—it has the director playing a man who's undergoing testing on a sort of bionic eye. Of course, the leap forward in medical science is attuned to a supernatural frequency that, along with the electromagnetic

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BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Shining Girls
By Lauren Beukes
Mulholland
368 pp, \$25.99

Lauren Beukes is a unique storyteller, and while *The Shining Girls* is a serial-killer tale, its unique assimilation of elements from the crime, thriller and even sci-fi genres—in addition to its atypical structure—make this novel stand out among similar narratives that are often presented in more traditional and formulaic fashions.

The novel primarily focuses on Kirby Mazrachi, our bright and endearingly smarmy and sarcastic heroine who has survived an attempted murder by heinous serial killer Harper Curtis. Using her wit and journalistic connections, she seeks vengeance on the savage murderer, but little does she know when she embarks on this quest that he possesses the ability to transcend time. Harper has been steadily weaving his way through history, killing the “shining girls”—intelligent young women with ambitious aspirations (“Shining stars linked together throughout time. A constellation of murder”)—one by one. It is up to Kirby and Dan, an

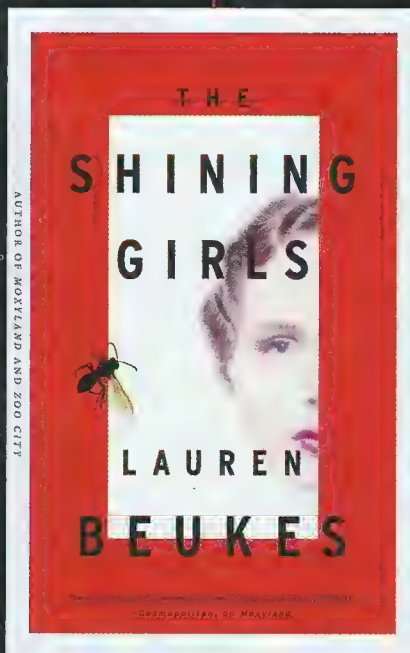
ex-homicide reporter who begins to develop feelings for her, to assemble the pieces of this perplexing—and seemingly impossible—mystery.

The novel is divided into vignettes, and though its entirety is told in the third person, each section revolves around a different character—often Kirby and sometimes Harper, plus an assemblage of murder victims and bystanders along the way. This Chicago-centric tale also shifts time periods with each account, beginning in the Depression era and ending in the mid-1990s, alternating between the decades and succeeding in weaving them all into one intertwining web. Despite the

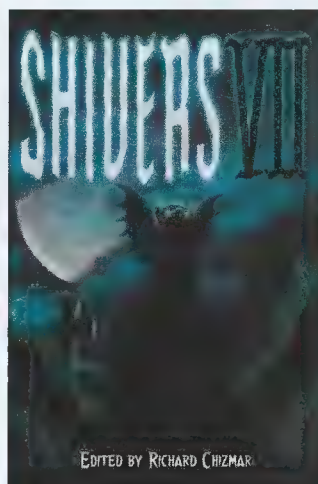
more fantastical elements, it is evident that Beukes has taken deliberate care with historical accuracy and composed her story accordingly. She has meticulously cultivated a cohesive style and aesthetic that’s consistently maintained throughout the fluctuating characters and eras.

Beukes writes in simple and cutting, but simultaneously beautifully crafted and effective, prose punctuated by moments of visceral gore on par with Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho*. The mystery is compelling and the plotline consistently engaging; *The Shining Girls* is a tantalizing read.

—Vivienne Vaughn



first two winners, the compilation veers into hit-or-miss territory, ranging from fascinating inclusions like Ed Gorman’s “The Baby Store” and Rio Yowers’ “Depth” to meandering genre outliers like Norman Prentiss’ “The Storybook Forest” and Tim Waggoner’s “Zombie Dreams.” Some of the more inspired entries include Darren Speegle’s “A Lonely Town in Alaska” and Rick Hautala’s “GPS,” which practically cry out



for further exploration—literary or otherwise.

On the whole, the imaginative works on offer here outweigh the generic and predictable tales, making *Shivers VII* a worthy read for fright fans. While a more careful selection process, and possibly the excision of some of the fringe genre qualifiers, could have made *Shivers VII* a home run, this latest installment is fulfilling for those with the proper expectations and a willingness to appreciate the works of more obscure scribes. Does it challenge the reader intellectually or provide a sense of looming dread or phantasmagoric transgression? No, but it is entertaining, and even engrossing at times, which for a series this far along is pretty impressive in its own right. (Available in a signed limited-edition hardcover and trade paperback at www.cemeterydance.com.)

—Ken Hanley

Shivers VII
Edited by Richard Chizmar
Cemetery Dance
400 pp, \$40/\$20

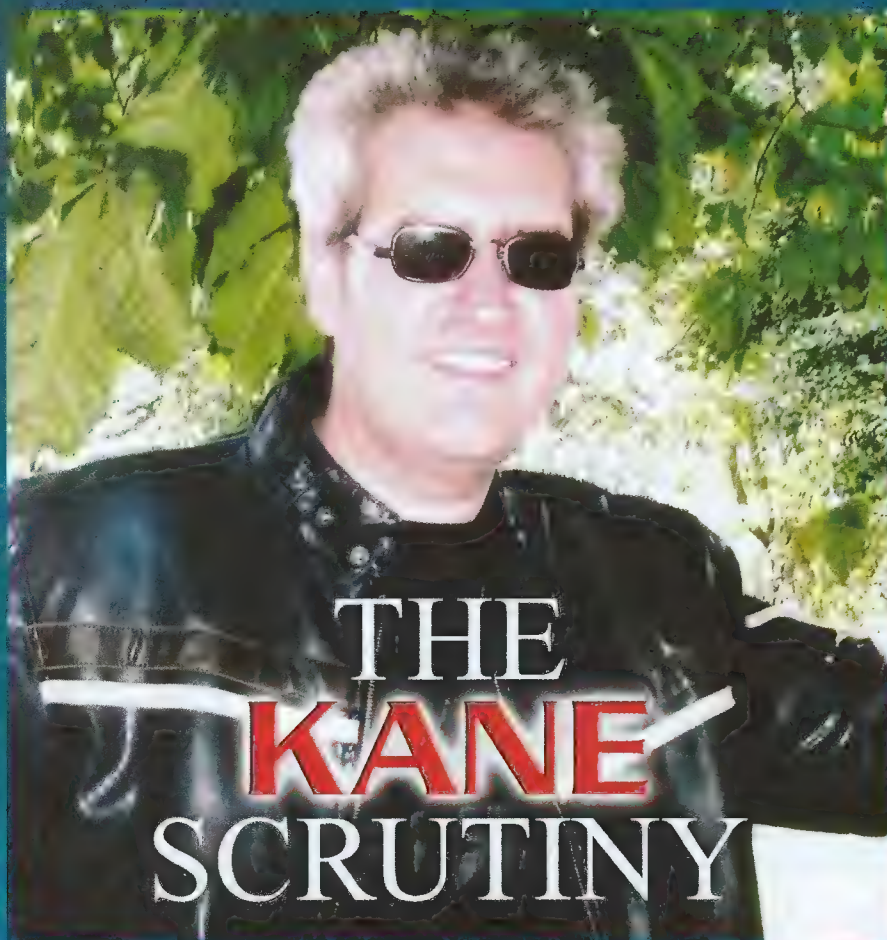
At times, reviewing short-story compilations can be equated to reviewing a restaurant at random, dish by dish. Chances are, for every tale you love for its combination of craftsmanship and appeal to your specific tastes, you’ll find one that is lazy and barely connected to the omnibus’ overall tone. The *Shivers* series,

now on its seventh entry, is no exception to this rule, as its impressive entries are as frequent and varied as those that prove underwhelming.

Shivers VII includes several names that literary horror hounds are bound to recognize, including Stephen King (whose included story “Weeds” was famously adapted in *Creepshow*, starring the author himself), Clive Barker and Graham Masterton, while showcasing the work of almost two dozen other authors. The

lower profiles of some of these often work to the reader’s advantage, as expectations are subverted in the best possible ways to offer a surprisingly satisfying experience. *Shivers VII* begins very strong, with a captivating Barker reprint (“The Departed”) that features his signature Gothic macabre in a refreshingly poignant context, followed by “Red Rover, Red Rover,” an effective and intense contribution from Norman Partridge.

But after the promise of these



THE KANE SCRUTINY

A love of "Hellraiser" sparked one of modern horror's most original writing talents.

By **BARBIE WILDE**

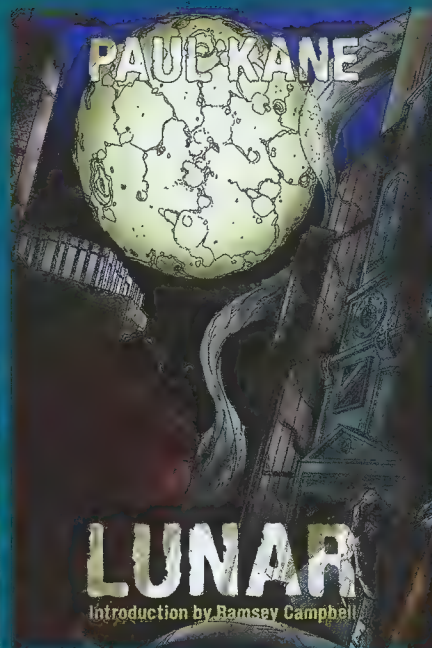
I first encountered Paul Kane via an interview he did with me for his book *The Hellraiser Films and Their Legacy* back in 2006. I was impressed by his questions, which moved beyond the usual "How long did it take to transform you into a Cenobite?" type queries. The book went on to achieve great success—Clive Barker calls him "the resident *Hellraiser* expert"—and Paul has written many horror and fantasy novels and short stories since, as well as editing (with his wife Marie O'Regan) some well-received horror anthologies, such as *Hellbound Hearts* (based on Clive's *Hellraiser* mythology) and *The Mammoth Book of Body Horror*.

Paul is now embarking on his first full-length screenplay, based on his short horror novel *Lunar* (Crossroad Press/Bad Moon Books). He creates beautifully visceral, dark tales that are intriguing, disturbing and tautly written. I invite you to explore his work; you won't be disappointed.

FANGORIA: Was there a defining moment in your life when you decided you wanted to be a writer?

PAUL KANE: I think, as with a lot of writers, it developed over time. I was always interested in stories, right from an early age; my dad used to buy me comics, so

when I was old enough, I had a go at drawing some myself. And I was always writing these outlandish tales for English class at school, which bled into writing stories at home in my teens. I originally wanted to go into comic-book illustration and went to art college with that in mind, but turned out to be better at writing essays. Then, at university, I took a course in professional writing and realized I could make a living through journalism, which was what I did when I left. But the stories were still nagging at me, and I turned to doing shorts for the small



presses and building up my fiction writing from there.

FANG: Was there a horror film, book or TV show that made a big impression on you as a child?

KANE: Quite a few, really. Seeing *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the 1978 version, when I was about 7 had a profound impact—it scared the crap out of me, but I realized I also kinda liked that. I read and watched a lot of horror from about 10 onward, and authors who stood out for me were people like King, Herbert, Ramsey Campbell, Lovecraft and so on. Directors I liked were people such as Cronenberg, Lynch, Carpenter, Romero. Then along came Clive Barker with his *Books of Blood* and *Hellraiser*, and I was just blown away. Here was a guy who was writing books and making movies—although I soon learned he had fingers in so many more pies. People are probably sick of hearing how much I love Clive's work and what an inspiration he was—and still is—to me, but he definitely turned things around and made me aware of just how much could be done within the genre.

FANG: What do the *Hellraiser* films mean to you personally?

KANE: *Hellraiser* came along at a certain



Chilling *Wind Chimes* are in the air for Joanna Ignaczewska and Robert Carratta in the Paul Kane-penned short.

Photo: Copyright Filmic Media

point in my life and just grabbed my attention. I was too young to see the original at the cinema, but I remember seeing images of the Cenobites, and in particular Pinhead, and just thinking, "Wow!" I also remember seeing skinless Frank and being desperate to see what was at that time a "forbidden" film. When I finally caught it at home on VHS, I was terrified, but I was also astounded by how Clive and his team had made the most horrific imagery look beautiful on screen. The wonderful thing about the *Hellraiser* universe is that it's so big, and you can do so much within it, it'll never run out of steam. You only have to look at how many movies there are and how popular the new comics from BOOM! have been to see that. The Cenobites and their world continue to grab me even now, all these years later.

FANG: You write such imaginative, visceral, muscular horror novels—what scares you?

KANE: Not a huge amount in books and movies anymore—though the odd effect or scene might take me by surprise every now and again. I thought *The Intruders* was quite creepy, for example, and I absolutely loved *Dark Matter* by Michelle Paver. But it's more about the story now for me—whether that gets under my skin or not and whether it's clever with its horror. Other than that, it's real-life stuff that scares me, like anyone else. Health issues, something happening to a family member, things like that. But then again, all that tends to feed back into my work, so those fears are probably not a bad thing. They're helping me make a living!

FANG: The concepts for your novels and stories are so varied: moon-affected zombies, twin-obsessed serial killers, new takes on fairy tales like *Red Riding Hood*. Where do you get your ideas?

KANE: Ideas I don't really have a problem with. They're all around us all the time—in a newspaper, a snippet of conversation, a line in a movie or book. I jot everything down in little notebooks I can fit in my

"Ideas I don't really have a problem with. They're all around us all the time."

pocket, which means that whenever something occurs to me, I can always get it down straight away before I forget. For longer projects, I have bigger notebooks—one for each individual novel or novella.

FANG: How did you feel the first time you saw a story of yours produced as a film?

KANE: I've only had short films made so far, though there was an episode of NBC's *Fear Itself* called *New Year's Day* that was based on my story "Dead Time." It felt very strange, is all I can say. The first short based on one of my stories/scripts was *The Opportunity*, made by some friends of mine locally, but with a pretty

decent budget. It's a stalker thriller in black and white, and I got to visit the set while they were shooting it. Unfortunately, I couldn't make it over to Cannes when it premiered there, but I was told it went down very well.

All three of the shorts that have been made are different animals, and I like them all for different reasons. *The Weeping Woman*, by award-winning U.S. director Mark Steensland and starring *Fright Night*'s Stephen Geoffreys, is more of a visceral horror piece, like those I remember from my youth. It even had a score by the fantastic Fabio Frizzi, the long-time Lucio Fulci collaborator. Most recent is the subtle ghost story *Wind Chimes*, directed by Brad Watson, who's also on board to direct *Lunar*. I've known Brad for a while now, and he really gets my work.

I didn't have a vast amount of control over any of the adaptations, really, but then writers don't tend to. It's been interesting to see how different directors handle my stories, however. Even something like *New Year's Day*, which is very different from the tale I wrote, is interesting to watch. I learned a long time ago not to get upset when something changes from page to screen; it's just another person's vision. Film and TV are much more collaborative media, after all.

FANG: What's next for you?

KANE: I've dipped a toe in the water with a short YA novel called *The Rainbow Man*, under the name P.B. Kane, which will come out through Rocket Ride Books, and will be my first audiobook as well as print. I have a collection of longer stories and novelettes coming out from Dark Moon Books called *The Spaces Between*; it features "Dead Time" plus two more set in that universe, and comes with a cracking zombie cover by *The Walking Dead*'s Charlie Adlard, not to mention an introduction



There's always a mess to clean up on *New Year's Day* (with Niall Matter).

by best-selling author Kelley Armstrong. The publisher who put out *Creakers* is also bringing out a collection of all my supernatural tales later this year called simply *Ghosts*, which boasts suitably haunting cover art by Edward Miller.

Then there's a *Hellraiser* interview book in the works, an anthology of Dupin stories I've co-edited with Charles Pre-polec called *Beyond Rue Morgue* coming out this summer through Titan, plus two new Quayle novellas of more humorous horror from Pendragon again. All that and a slew of short stories appearing in various publications and magazines, a new novel I've just begun that I can't really talk about just yet and being on the organizing committee of the World Fantasy Convention 2013, taking place in Brighton this October. It's certainly a busy time for me—quite possibly my busiest year or so yet!

To learn more about Kane, check out his website at www.shadow-writer.co.uk

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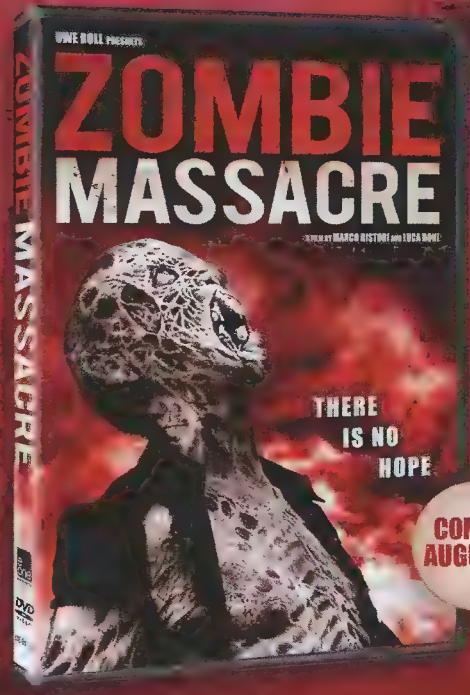
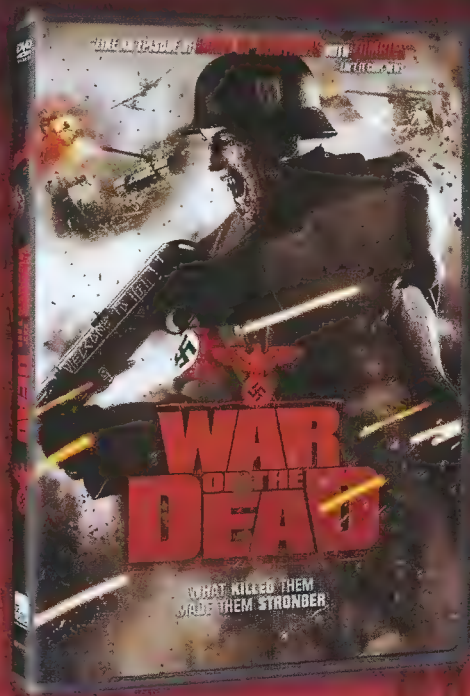
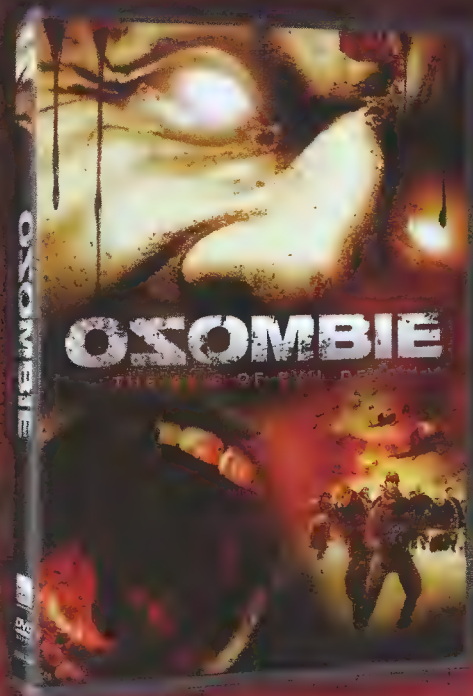
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Steven Severin: From a Scream to a Whisper



The *Haunted Palace*) and compose a series of alternate scores to obscure and wonderful films, performed live in a project christened *Music for Silents*. His most recent venture, a highly effective rescoring of Carl Dreyer's somnambulist dreamscape *Vampyr*, has been touring internationally, and was

released last year on CD.

FANGORIA: There were signs of an interest in Gothic horror in the Banshees' early work, like "Voices," "Red Over White" and of course "The Premature Burial." What initially drew you to works of the macabre and surreal, and what is their continued appeal?

STEVEN SEVERIN: Like everybody of my generation, I was weaned on late-night TV viewings of Hammer/Amicus/AIP horror films. We knew even back then that the majority of them were formulaic and quite cynically marketed to us as an adolescent audience, but we didn't care, because they were "ours" when so little was, and when they worked—*The Devil Rides Out*, for example—they really worked! I don't believe there's any continued appeal, but rather, it led me to more psychological fare like *The Tenant* and *Possession*, and these days things like Michael Haneke's *White Ribbon*, for example. I can't say I've been excited by a straightforward "Gothic horror" film for more than 20 years.

FANG: What inspired you to pursue film scoring? After the intensity of being in a band, was it a liberating experience?

SEVERIN: It's something I've always wanted to do. I wished we'd been given the opportunity as a band to write a score, but all we got were invitations to be in films, playing in a nightclub—you know, *The Hunger*-style. It seemed obvious to me, given the often epic, cinematic atmospheres the Banshees conjured up, but as I have since found out, filmmakers rarely know anything about music! To be honest, it didn't seem noticeably "liberating" because along with Siouxsie, I ran the Banshees. It operated as a benign dictatorship, because up until the very end, Siouxsie and I saw eye to eye on everything. It was our love/hate child. Nobody else's opinion really mattered.

FANG: *Vampyr* has a very textural timbral approach, with only the occasional use of a motif. What is your working method in terms of approaching the material?

SEVERIN: I tend to search for the strongest, most emotional scene first to set the temperature. So the beginning is always very instinctual, and once I've set foot into the narrative, I seek out the various story arcs and watch each character's journey. From there, it's primarily just decision-making. I don't set myself limitations, like a defined sound palette, for example—I let the film dictate. You have to surrender to it and let the magic happen.

FANG: Are there other films you would like to approach?

SEVERIN: Quite a few, but it's tricky. If rights and/or permission weren't an issue, I'd love to re-score Kenneth Anger's *Magick Lantern Cycle*. There's no chance of that, though, certainly while he's still alive. I was interested in Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, but that's about to get a makeover on the South Bank. I'd like to have a shot at Maya Deren's films, and I recently got ahold of all of Harry Houdini's footage of his stunts, so I'm keen to view that with an eye to a Houdini montage-style show. I had the idea of doing Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* at the Lon-

don Zoo, which would be fantastic, but it's impossible to strip out the original music and leave the dialogue and foley intact, so one plan would be to add new music to what's already there. Sounds mental, but there might be a way to augment and still leave my mark.

Also, because *Vampyr* isn't strictly a silent film, it has given me ideas for stripping out the original sound from other subtitled movies, effectively rendering them "silent." With that in mind, I approached Redemption Films for permission to possibly rescore Jean Rollin's *The Nude Vampire*. Controversial, I know, and I risk being lynched by fanatical Rollinites, but I am tempted.

FANG: Are there any plans to release films such as *Vampyr* with your score accompanying—or at least as an alternate layer, like Philip Glass' score for *Dracula*—or have you found certain groups resistant to that?

SEVERIN: None, I'm afraid. I could go into detail, but my relationship with the rights holders of the films I've already done is precarious enough without me ruining it by expressing what I really think in public. Suffice to say, there is resistance. Lots of resistance.

FANG: Any feature scores on the horizon?

SEVERIN: A film I scored last year with my wife Arban, *Joshua Tree, 1951: A Portrait of James Dean*, is currently on the festival circuit, and we just did a short documentary for Channel 4 entitled *Fraud Lord* about the rise and fall of "Lord" Eddie Davenport. I'm down to work on the horror anthology *The Profane Exhibit*—10 directors paired with 10 musicians on 10 intertwined stories. It looks quite a bit more hardcore than anything I've done before, so it's potentially an interesting challenge. Richard Stanley is involved, so I had to say yes!

More information on Severin's tour and future projects can be found at www.stevenseverin.com.

—Ashley Thorpe

Objects in black ink, fringed in white, breathing and living and anticipating a color."

—Red Over White

Siouxsie and the Banshees never belonged to the comic-book world of punk rock; their iconoclasm was no mere pose. Indeed, by 1978, when the so-called "movement" had imploded, the Banshees had revealed themselves to be perhaps the most inventive group to have emerged from the punk underground. Constantly leapfrogging their contemporaries, they defied easy definition; influenced by Alfred Hitchcock (Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* shower-scene score was famously used to audition guitarists), the introspective, fractured personalities of Edgar Allan Poe and avant-garde cinema as much as by David Bowie and Iggy Pop, the Banshees created an assured, exploratory knife-edge culture of their own.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that founding member Steven Severin should return post-Banshees almost exclusively to his love of cinema ("Voices," the haunting B-side to "Hong Kong Garden," was influenced by a viewing of

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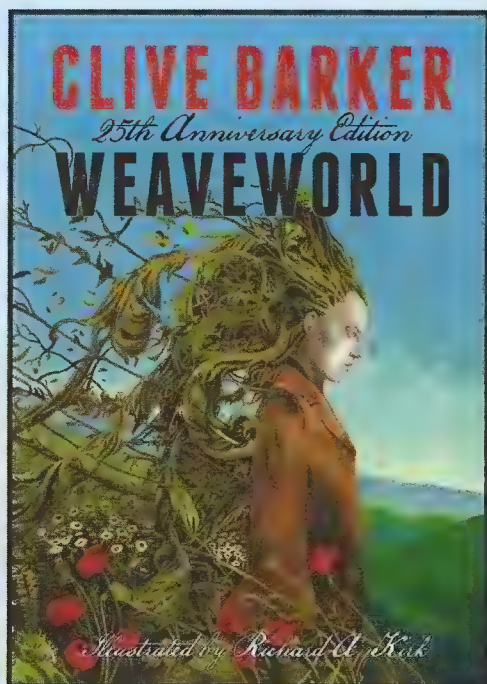
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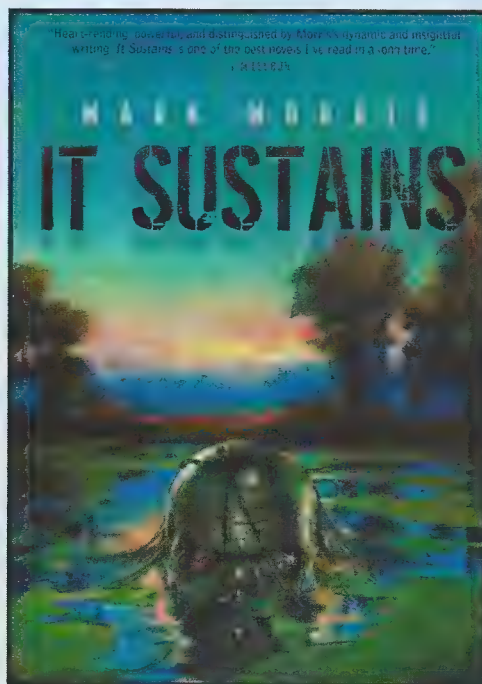


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—John Nicol, *FANGORIA*

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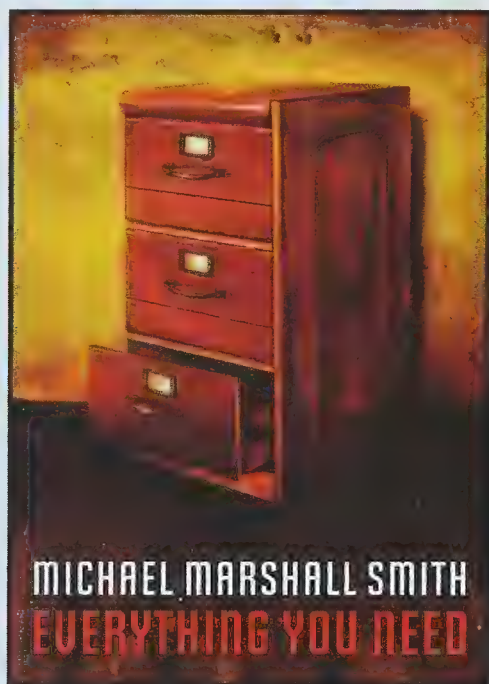


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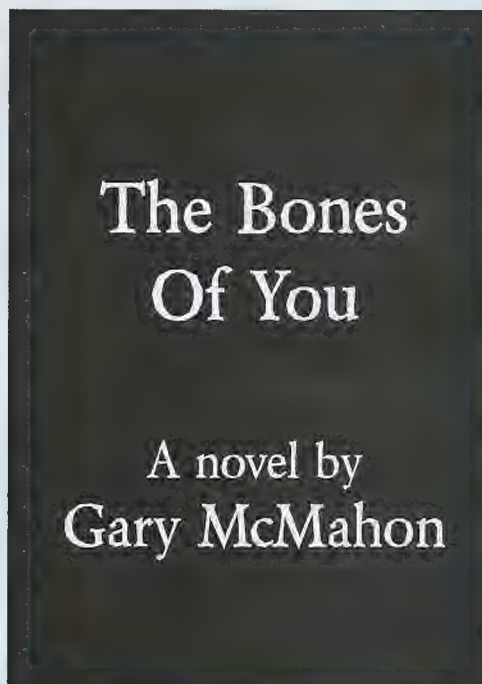


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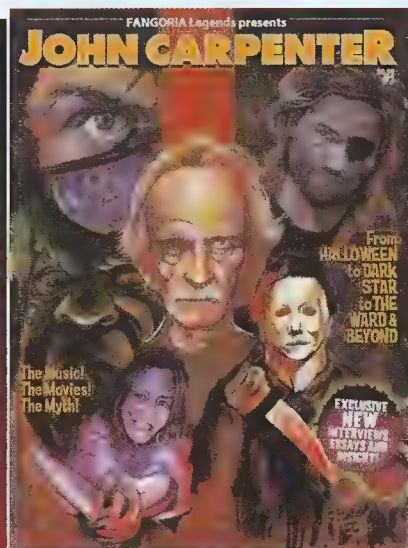
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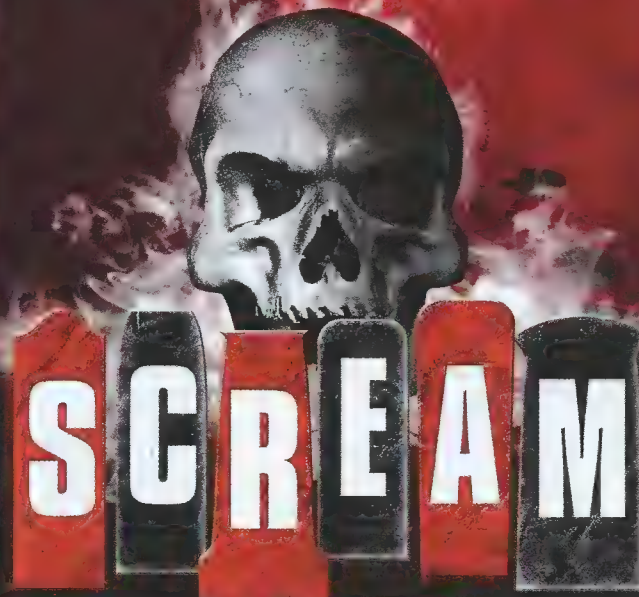
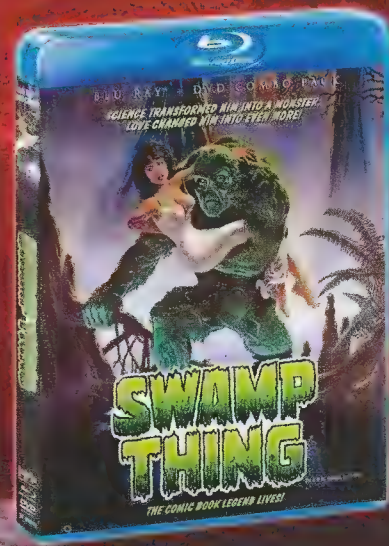
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Lee Gambin is thrilled to have Stephen King involved in the making-of-*Carrie* book he's working on. **David Gregory** has to finish production on Blu-rays of *Thirst*, *Dead Kids* and *Hot Nights of Linda* before coming up for air. **Nathan Hamilton's** *Son of Celluloid* show began infesting YouTube this month. **Aidan Johnson** is a lawyer and occasional writer of op-eds and film reviews, including articles on dark cinematic byways. **Tim Lucas** recorded commentaries for three upcoming Jess Franco releases from *Redemption*. **Trevor Parker** would like to wish Señor Franco a restful slumber and thank him for his version of *Count Dracula* with Christopher Lee. **Lianne Spiderbaby** loves the movie *Crapsey*. **Ashley Thorpe** is proud to welcome Steven Severin to Borley Rectory; check Carrionfilms.co.uk for fundraiser details! Former Cenobite "**Bad Barbie**" **Wilde** commits major pimpage for her novel *The Venus Complex* at www.barbielwilde.com. **Owen Williams** recently saw Deicide and Seamus Heaney in the same week, and feels smugly eclectic.

One of the scariest flicks in recent years is back to frighten you anew, on screen and in our pages.

Director **James Wan** and the rest of the scream team return with **INSIDIOUS CHAPTER 2**, in which the first film's family face Further terrors from the realm of dark spirits. We'll peer into the darkness with them.

From the ghostly to the ghostly, **YOU'RE NEXT** targets another family with a violent home invasion that sheds plenty of blood. This one's a winner, and we have chats with director **Adam Wingard**, scripter **Simon Barrett** and members of the cast.

On a lighter note, the gang behind *Shaun of the Dead* have reunited for **THE WORLD'S END**, in which the ultimate pub crawl is interrupted by very unearthly beings. Director **Edgar Wright** and star **Simon Pegg** will reveal what's behind the invasion.

Also look for our delayed coverage of **FRANKENSTEIN'S ARMY** and more on **JUG FACE**, plus a trip to the skeletal set of the dark fantasy/thriller **THE MORTAL INSTRUMENTS:**

CITY OF BONES. We're also tracking down **Amber Heard** to talk up her long-delayed, finally-arriving **ALL THE BOYS LOVE MANDY LANE**, and putting together a 30th-anniversary retrospective on **John Landis'** monstrous Michael Jackson music video **THRILLER**. You're not even safe at home in **FANGORIA #326!**

YOUNG

(continued from page 22)

he never really hung out with the rest of us on set. I didn't get to know him that well, sadly. I was mainly hanging out with the ladies. The women got me! We worked very similarly, very emotionally driven from a place of honesty.

FANG: Sonny's birthday party is very emotional. What are your thoughts on that?

YOUNG: You're very right there; that scene is extremely touching. That was where Rutanya and I discussed maybe going into it as if we know that something bad is about to happen. As performers, we knew that this scene, where our son is pretty much saying his goodbyes to us, was going to be a pivotal moment, so we went into it with lots of thoughts and ideas. It is moving and touching; I mean, even with all the horror and violence, there is sadness in the movie, and that's all Damiano giving us really heartfelt direction. When I hugged Sonny, I thought of redemption and sympathized with his loneliness. I felt the boy was so alone and in his own world that he was naturally detached from the rest of us, so when he tries to connect at the birthday party, he can't. Jack, who was an actor in his own little world, did that so well.

FANG: Do you remember filming the scene where you find the wall painted with the dragon and the words "dishonor thy father"?

YOUNG: Oh, of course—it was genuinely spooky. That was all Damiano's work, and that painting was rather crude but still very effective. There is something dramatic about invading someone's house and sending evil messages. You know, there was a horrible earthquake during the shoot in Mexico that knocked out a whole chunk of a town close by us. This was around the same time we shot that scene with the painting. It was all very scary.

FANG: What were some of the most notable differences between working on the *Rocky* films and a movie like *Amityville II*?

YOUNG: You have to realize that Sylvester Stallone is a workaholic who knows what he wants very clearly and solidly. He is a great artist. So working with him, there was a clear insight as to what he wanted from my performance. In regards to Damiano and *Amityville*, there was more freedom, room to breathe and play around with the character—one I didn't like at all. He was a horrible man. Not that Paulie from *Rocky* was a nice guy; he was a flawed fellow too. But *Amityville* was fun to make; we all had an amazing time, and I think it's a great scary movie. Dino De Laurentiis was the one who knew it was going to be better than the first film, and in my opinion it is. Dino was very smart, as is Sylvester, and both movies were made for very little money but have had so much impact.

BENEATH

(continued from page 33)

ing about cinema, and I discuss shots that same way. There's an analysis of how the audience experiences an image, the unfolding of a story; I find delight in all of these things. That's what makes movies interesting to me. If you're on a long lens, you're condensing the image and that has one effect, and if you're using wide-angle, it has another.

"It's also the pacing, which is why I've been involved with Ti West. He has this understanding of pacing, and in fact all the guys I'm associated with, whom I've helped produce, take the fun of horror and view it in a fresh way, and that's certainly how I'm trying to address these very clichéd stories. It's the telling, of course—just like it's fun to hear an old, famous song done as a cover. You enjoy the new version, and that's how I see this. This is obviously influenced by *Jaws* as well as *Lifeboat*, and I always reference *Duel*, because to me, that's pure cinema. There's very little dialogue; it's just about the unfolding of the images—although there is quite a bit of dialogue, and the richness the actors bring is another pleasure."

Whether it's a pleasure for the actors is debatable. The day Fango soaks up the sun on the barge, Zovatto is in for a grueling swim as multiple takes are required for his fish chase. "Even the actors said, 'Would we really be so stranded? We could probably swim to shore,'" Fessen-den admits, "but they're dealing with the physicality and all this water and blood and the boat and how exhausting it is to paddle and how they're sort of going nowhere, and then a little gust of wind can take them somewhere else. It really would be incredibly challenging to get out of this predicament. It's fun to get them to this physical place where they're actually suffering."

Which is to say that after all the intense thematics, the actors' pain, etc., the killer fish is really just the icing on the cake. A practical contraption, thankfully, that glides through the lake (created by Fractured FX, and brought to life by puppeteers Eric Fiedler and Gary Grove), it was designed by the director himself. "It's weird," he recalls. "I did it fairly quickly, with a meticulous burst of energy. I wanted a kind of punk fish. I used porcupine quills on its back, because obviously I wasn't going to have a dorsal fin; that would just be too demoralizing, since I wasn't making a shark film. I wanted that same sense that you could see some of the creature and it's teasing them as it goes around and around, and the original script had the great conceit that the oar gets stuck into the back of the fish quite early, so here you have this menacing element floating past them. For the rest of it, I just combined a bunch of nasty-looking creatures, like the catfish tail. The irony is, there are fish this big."

ROHM

(continued from page 56)

young son. Also ironic that, I believe, her husband was a race-car driver. She was very sensitive and had also been on stage as a child dancing, so we had things in common.

FANG: You dropped out of acting in the late 1970s, while at your peak. Why?

ROHM: I left because in those days, 35 was too old to get any worthwhile parts as a woman. I am very glad to say that has changed since. As for my film acting having improved, I was brought up with two months of rehearsals for each play, and had a hard time adjusting to the film directors I worked with who basically said where to come in, where to say the lines and where to go afterward. I'm not sure I ever really got used to that. I remember trying to discuss wardrobe with a director who said, "I don't care, I'll shoot whatever you wear." I was quite shocked by that.

FANG: You became a prolific producer in your own right, ushering forth such pictures as the Anthony Perkins vehicle *Edge of Sanity*, written in part by Franco. Was producing more creatively fulfilling for you?

ROHM: I would not say so; it just evolved that way. Harry and I were so close that I was involved in whatever he did, no matter what. I am much more comfortable, though, with the creative aspects of movies. The business side is rather frustrating, filled with people who may have money but not necessarily any artistic understanding of or sensitivity to what they're reading or talking about. Many of Harry's films suffered from that. To raise the money, one had to make concessions that hurt the projects. Harry was much more of an optimist and a fighter than I am. When one film didn't turn out the way he wanted, he would move on to the next project with as much hope and enthusiasm as ever. Harry was one of a kind. I have never met another man, let alone an independent producer, with the same imagination or heartfelt belief in and feeling for great literature and great performances. Many of Harry's most cherished ideas never made it to the screen, as the financiers couldn't understand his vision. It was easier for Harry in the early days in radio and television.

FANG: Is it difficult for you now to discuss Harry and those bygone years, or does remembering the past bring you joy?

ROHM: It is both—difficult as well as heartwarming. It's been almost four years and I have not adjusted to the situation yet, but I can talk about Harry now, which would not have been as easy even one year ago. Forty-five years is a long time. I have no other family, so Harry was everything.

Maria Rohm is now on-line! Go to www.mariarohm.com for more on her life, loves and work.

CASTLE

(continued from page 65)

person—a transvestite (the sly showman changed the name of the actress playing the part from Joan Marshall to the asexual Jean Arless). The involving story and surprise twist make this one of Castle's most entertaining movies, and he himself wrote, "Of all the films I had made, *Homicidal* was the most fun."

Castle followed up these flicks with *Mr. Sardonicus* (1961), for which two endings were filmed (though some sources claim only one ever was), with the audience deciding Sardonicus' fate via a "Punishment Poll"; *Zotz!* (1962); *13 Frightened Girls* and *The Old Dark House* (both 1963); and *Strait-Jacket* (1964), written by *Psycho* author Robert Bloch and starring Joan Crawford, at which attendees were given bloody cardboard axes. Audience tastes were shifting by the mid-'60s, however, and these movies began drawing smaller crowds; all that changed when Castle acquired the rights to Ira Levin's novel *Rosemary's Baby*. Castle intended to both produce and direct the movie, but Paramount insisted on hiring Roman Polanski to helm; Castle gave in, but forever regretted not taking the reins himself.

Rosemary's Baby became a hit upon its 1968 release and subsequently a classic, of course—though along with its success came scores of hate letters and death threats to Castle for producing a film with satanic subject matter. After its release, Castle was struck down by recurring kidney stones and faced many surgeries; always the showman, he claimed the stones were the real curse of *Rosemary's Baby*. As Castle was recovering from his illness, he received word that the film's composer, Christopher (Krzysztof) Komeda had fallen into a coma and died; a worse blow followed when Polanski's pregnant wife Sharon Tate, along with several of her friends, were murdered by the Manson Family in Polanski's oceanfront home.

After *Rosemary's Baby*, Castle produced and/or directed a few more films, including *Shanks*, but they just didn't catch fire with critics or audiences. His last gimmick involved insuring a giant cockroach, Hercules, for \$1 million while making his final feature *Bug* (1975). Castle died of a heart attack May 31, 1977; he was just 63 years old. Numerous filmmakers since have tried to use assorted gimmicks to draw people to their productions, but none have done so with Castle's panache and style. Certainly, today's youthful filmgoers, accustomed to cutting-edge, ultrarealistic technology, probably couldn't appreciate his tricks—but those kids who watched a goofy skeleton soar over their heads or screamed their lungs out to stop the Tinger from getting them no doubt got a bigger thrill than any jaded moviegoer in 2013...and beyond.

V/H/S/2

(continued from page 67)

like is, he maintains his humanity a little bit because he has just been bitten. His brain hasn't melted enough yet."

"The big thing was just trying to keep it fresh," Sanchez continues. "That's something we didn't really face on *Blair Witch*, because most of the stuff we shot for that was just one take; we were not even near [the actors]. For some of the scenes in the house, we had to do retakes, and keeping that fresh each time was difficult. That was the big challenge: Making a scene look like it's really happening for the first time when you're shooting it the seventh."

"To me, the hardest part is just keeping the pacing correct," adds Wingard. "You don't have a lot of alternatives in terms of the way you can cut it, and you still want it to be, especially in a *V/H/S* film, concise and to the point and pretty fast. It's all about trying to make that work in whatever context you've chosen."

"What I find frustrating in a lot of recent found-footage films is that there are so many wasted shots," says Eisener, whose "Alien Abduction Slumber Party," scripted by the director and John Davies, caps the film (preceded by Evans and Tjahjanto's incredible "Safe Haven," about a documentary visit to an Indonesian religious-cult compound that goes horribly awry). "I feel like, even with this kind of movie, you should still stay within the narrative rule of every shot having to push the story forward. There's so much shit in the *Paranormal Activity* movies where they're just filming random stuff. It doesn't do anything for the characters; they bore you, bore you, bore you until something flutters in the curtain and you're like, 'Ohh!' because something is finally happening. With 'Slumber Party,' I didn't have time to do that. I had 15 minutes and I had to get right into it and every shot had to count, and that's what keeps the energy so alive."

Probably *V/H/S/2*'s most energetic segment, Eisener's mischievous, reckless and ambitious piece sees him discard the age-old Hollywood maxim of "never work with kids or animals" by attaching the camera to both. It results in something both rowdy and sweet, as its young ensemble and their antics are just as engaging as the later extraterrestrial creep-out. "At times I'd just give the kids the camera, or sometimes I'd give them direction on how to move it," Eisener says.

The film's star puppy, though, eventually proved that chaos is not so easily maintained. "The dog would never do what I wanted it to do," Eisener recalls. "So I just had to be behind it, steering it in the directions I wanted it to go. I actually did think I'd be able to get it to run with the kids and follow them, but no, not at all."

"The dog had his own vision, man!" Sanchez laughs.

DUMP BIN DIARIES

"Action-Packed 4 Movie Marathon"

Crack open any recent Fango, page to the Dr. Cyclops review column and drink in the breathless praise for whatever was that month's release on the Scream Factory disc label. Those plaudits are well-deserved: The Scream discs have been flawless in terms of transfers, extras and the curating of cult titles. But with this division churning out the cream, parent outfit Shout! Factory has decided to skim off the cheesy byproduct not quite tasty enough for the deluxe treatment and send it to market regardless; a perfect case in point is the two-DVD *Action-Packed 4 Movie Marathon*.

The set kicks off with *Cyclone* (1987), a representative of the age when futuristic, militarized conveyances could be regarded as stars in their own right (think *Airwolf*, *Knight Rider*, et al.). Teri (Heather Thomas) is an aerobicized gym rat whose inventor boyfriend (Jeffrey Combs) is murdered by arms dealers out to steal his heavily armed custom motorcycle, forcing Teri to go on the run to protect the valuable prototype. Next up on the same disc is 1990's *Alienator*, in which rebel leader Kol (Ross Hagen) escapes execution on a prison planet and crashes down into Earth's wilderness. Rescued by four campers, Kol is pursued by an emotionless intergalactic killer (bodybuilding champ Teagan Clive), who was deployed by Kol's prison warden (a mumbly, oily Jan-Michael Vincent) and equipped with both a laser-cannon right arm and the physical dimensions of a Zamboni.

Both of these films are the product of prolific B-movie director Fred Olen Ray, whose tendency to have his camera linger and leer over his actresses makes Michael Bay seem gentlemanly. There have been numerous past instances of Ray parlaying a bantamweight budget into some sort of memorable, or at least humorous, result; not so with these two duds. *Alienator* is bare-bones sci-fi phrased like a slasher flick, with the extraterrestrial murderer prowling outside an isolated cabin while the dopey partiers within argue endlessly. *Cyclone* is a bore, front-loaded with tedious blabbing, and when precious moments of motorcycle action occur, they're doled out in inexcusably brief slivers (although when the climax does arrive, it's a glorious five minutes of lasers, explosions, car flips and catfights). And don't be enticed by *Cyclone*'s enlistment of several genre heroes in support (Combs, Hammer's Martine Beswick and Oscar winner Martin Landau, among others); through rudimentary plotting and blunt dialogue, the tremendous cast is, excuse

the indelicacy, pissed away like a urinal cake.

Disc two is a bit of an improvement, beginning with the 1986 Gary Busey action vehicle *Eye of the Tiger* (yes, *Survivor*'s anthemic *Rocky III* jam of the same title is trotted out on three separate occasions). Younger viewers probably identify Busey more from his current appearances as the punchline to his own joke on dire reality TV—a walking anti-drug and pro-motorcycle-helmet PSA. If nothing else, *Tiger* is a reminder that he was once a very capable and charismatic lead actor; this film arrived just before his unforgettable turn as Antarctic-veined Aryan Mr. Joshua in *Lethal Weapon*.

Here, Busey plays Buck, a convict released back to his home town and trying to re-integrate into family life, but instead running afoul of a corrupt sheriff (Seymour Cassel) and an invading army of drug smugglers on dirt bikes. These thugs assault nurses, murder Buck's wife and then disrupt her funeral service with loud engine-revving, just in case the audience is still undecided as to how despicable they are. It's all typical action-movie twaddle, done 100 times before and 100 times better, but *Tiger* eventually works as a passable time-waster once Buck attacks the criminals' shabby base-camp bivouac in his towering 4x4 truck, sending mangled bikes and stuntmen flying around the sandy terrain with abandon.

Finally, hopes for this set will surely crest as the logo for legendary crap purveyors Cannon Films clicks into place to kick off *Exterminator 2* (1984). Unassuming Bill Maher lookalike Robert Ginty returns as New York's very own flamethrower vigilante, this time locked in battle with X (Mario Van Peebles) and his gang of marauders who roam NYC parks and subway tunnels with impunity. Unlike the first *Exterminator*, which plays like a grumpier, greasier *Death Wish*, this installment is more than a bit silly, as our jowly hero takes on a rather harmless crew of roller-skating, nunchuck-twirling, pop-locking imbeciles (who nonetheless

manage to shoot down a police helicopter with a flare gun). Most fun is Van Peebles' energetic bad-guy turn, the actor flipping and pirouetting his way through his first major screen role (thankfully, the disc includes a commentary in which Van Peebles demonstrates a healthy sense of humor about the whole thing).

In summation, the *Marathon* quartet is horrendous. All four movies are guaranteed to befoul your corneas, but there is a measure of redemption to be had; each one is ripe for mockery and can serve as hilarious wallpaper for your next party. These flicks are probably best enjoyed while accompanied by like-minded friends ready to wisecrack and deliver them a communal kicking. Sure to inspire laughter are *Alienator*'s costumes (Kol's "space suit" includes jogging pants and partial oven mitts, while Clive's brassiere looks like it was put together using two Thermos lids), the suspiciously excessive flamboyance displayed by Van Peebles' X, a rousing patriotic speech delivered by Busey during a bingo game and *Cyclone*'s confused approximation of what punk rock sounds like. At *Marathon*'s price of 10 bucks or less, the investment is minimal, but the comedic potential is not. Gather up your peanut gallery and have at it.

—Trevor Parker



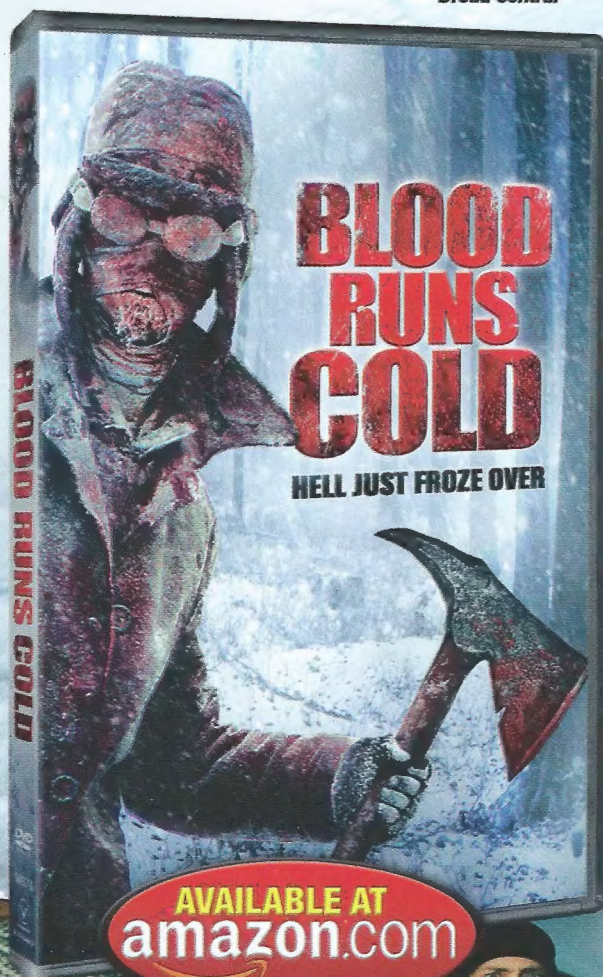
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